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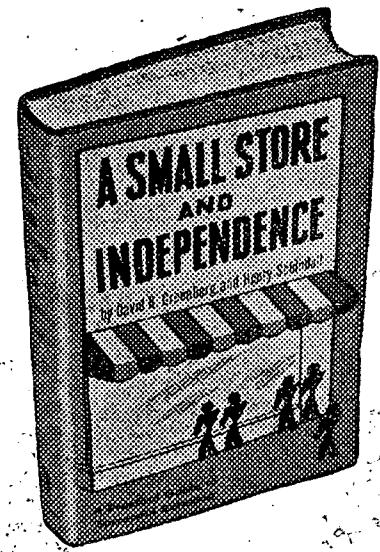

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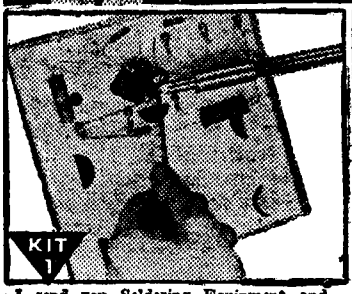

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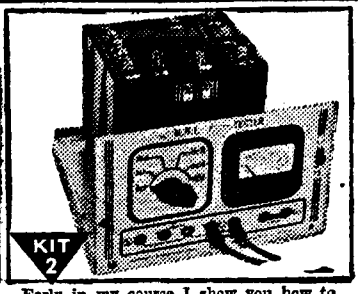

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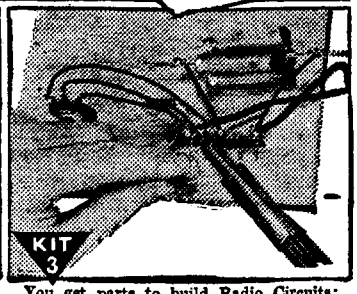

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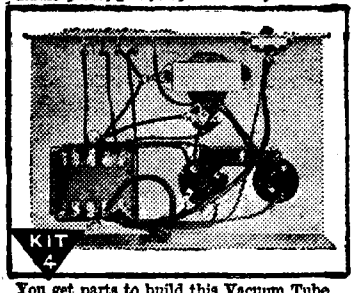

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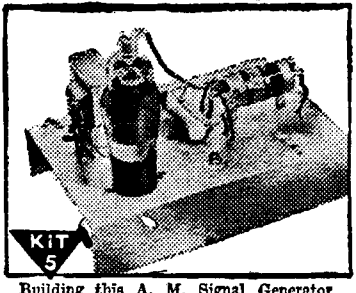

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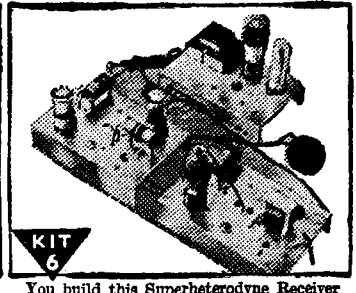

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

by Victoria Gray

YOU take it for granted that everything you do will come out all right. When you leave your home to go anywhere, you expect to reach your destination safely. In marriage you assume that you and your lifemate will remain true affinities. In work you want to feel that you are doing the job which is best suited to your abilities.

When you make a mistake, the error usually is unintentional. Sometimes, however, you take deliberate risks. This can happen in financial and emotional matters. When you speculate with your cash, there is danger of losing it. When you get involved with a person whose integrity is dwarfed, you take a chance of hurting your reputation.

During April, 1946, the temptation to take chances might be more numerous than at other times, due to a series of adverse planetary aspects. Fortunately there are favorable vibratory influences, to offset the stress that can be created by emotional unrest and economic confusion.

Dangers of Gossip

According to the astrological highlights, a sly person who sets out to spread underhanded gossip with no other reason than to stir up malice, could cause a lot of heartache on April 1st when Mercury and Neptune are parallel.

Say nothing, therefore, to anyone whom you do not trust implicity. The underhanded talk could flare up into a dramatic scene, or develop into a heated argument on the 3rd when Mars and Pluto are parallel. Put your correspondence in a safe place, and don't let your valuables lie around where they can attract the attention of someone who is greedy.

On the 4th, when the Sun and Uranus are in sextile aspect, you might hear of a surprise elopement; or two world-famous celebrities might announce their troth. At any rate, this aspect is favorable for starting on a honeymoon, or for taking a few days off for a short vacation. A trip, for business or pleasure, should prove interesting and rewarding.

Between midnight and dawn of the 6th, there could be some catastrophic airplane accidents as the result of the Moon's eclipse of Uranus; and several serious robberies, due to the Mars-Jupiter square. Avoid traffic hazards during the forenoon, and don't carry a large amount of money with you. Train and automobiles wrecks might take a heavy toll.

A Depressing Time

Elderly people, and well established business firms, are under adverse vibratory influence on the 8th, due to the Sun-Saturn square. Since the Moon conjoins Saturn on the same day, and within a few minutes later forms a square aspect with the Sun, almost everyone with whom you talk might be worried and depressed. Don't expect sympathy because most people might feel too sorry for themselves to be in a mood to give you encouragement.

Take every precaution against fire between midnight and sunrise on the 9th, while Mars is eclipsed by the Moon. Inasmuch as the Sun and Jupiter are parallel during the early hours of the day, some of the conflagrations might result in total loss, due to inadequate insurance.

On the 10th Mercury and Neptune are parallel. Therefore, you might hear a repetition of the scandal which annoyed you on the first day of April when these two Planets formed a similar aspect.

(Continued on page 8)

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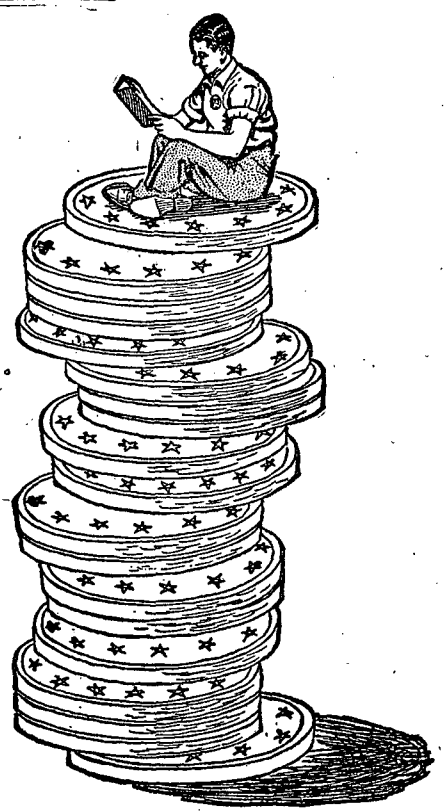

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

(Continued from page 6)

The Venus-Pluto square and the Sun-Jupiter opposition on the 12th are adverse aspects for social entertainments. Any party or celebration scheduled while these vibratory influences are in effect might prove exhausting, inconvenient, and expensive.

If you send out invitations, your guests might have to refuse; or you might have to cancel the arrangements at the last moment. Therefore, postpone your plans for a party or an anniversary, if you can defer them to another date.

With the exception of the lunar aspects, there are no major configurations until the 18th, when the Sun and Mars are in square aspect. This is an adverse influence for personal and public matters. Excitement, confusion, quarrels, and exasperation might mount to an enormous extent.

If you don't want to have a row, don't say anything that can be contradicted or resented, since the Mercury-Neptune parallel follows the Sun-Mars square within fifty minutes. Without intention you might make a remark that offends a friend or business associate whom you wish to please.

Beware of Accidents

Another revealing aspect is the Mars-Uranus parallel on the 19th, inasmuch as this involves the most fiery and electrifying forces in the Solar System. It is as if you were to toss a burning torch into a vat of highly inflammable gas. Even before you could take the first breath, the vat would burst into a solid wall of fire.

That is the sort of accident which could happen during the early part of Friday, April 19th. A match thrown away carelessly could start a million dollar blaze; a small defect in an airplane could cause the death of all the passengers; an automobile, driven recklessly could cause a crack-up of several other cars on a busy thoroughfare; and in human relationships the source of danger is impatience, haste, or rashness.

Watch where you are going, and wait for your anger to cool off before you contradict anyone. Furthermore, even though you keep excitement to a minimum, someone else might stir up a fuss; or while you are going somewhere, minding your own business, suddenly you might find yourself in the midst of a riot.

Any and all sorts of exciting combinations are possible. However by being forewarned by these interpretations of what the Stars reveal, you can take precautionary measures

(Continued on page 10)

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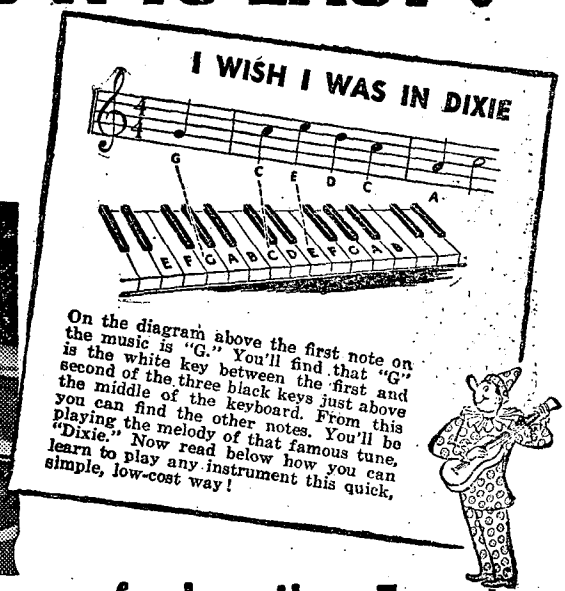
LOOKS EASY... ...AND IT IS EASY!

—yet, it's from that famous favorite of the South, "Dixie"



On the diagram above the first note on the music is "G." You'll find that "G" is the white key between the first and second of the three black keys just above the middle of the keyboard. From this you can find the other notes. You'll be playing the melody of that famous tune, "Dixie." Now read below how you can learn to play any instrument this quick, simple, low-cost way!

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

(Continued from page 8)

to avoid difficulties that are within your power to sidestep or control.

Harmonious Influences

The vibratory influences are much more harmonious during the afternoon and evening of the 19th, when the Moon is in sextile aspect with Neptune and in trine configuration with Pluto. These aspects are favorable for pleasant relaxation.

Also the Venus-Saturn sextile at 2:51 A.M. on the 20th is a serene influence for refreshing sleep. A restful night should do wonders in putting you into a pleasant frame of mind during the daylight hours which might be punctuated with all sorts of problems, due to minor irritations.

You might be annoyed by unnecessary interruptions, or someone might aggravate you by telling you a hard-luck story.

Attendance at church should prove inspiring on Sunday, the 21st. On the 22nd, however, you might feel emotionally distraught as the result of the adverse vibrations which are being generated by Neptune while it is in square aspect with the Moon, and in sesquiquadrate aspect with Venus.

Since these aspects occur during the morning, make sure that you don't get out of the "wrong side of the bed!"

The vibrations of the Mars-Uranus semi-square, which dominate the afternoon, are scarcely conducive for putting things to rights, once they start going off at a tangent.

There always are ways to make the best of things. That is why it is important to know the adverse aspects revealed by the Stars, as well as those which are harmonious.

The Mars-Saturn parallel at 5:20 A.M. on Tuesday, April 23rd, shows a serious pressure zone, since Saturn is opposed by the Moon six minutes later. At 9:20 on the same morning the Moon and Jupiter are in square aspect.

Exasperation may arrive at dawn, and hang around like a pall. This gloom might be caused by the difficulties you encounter in trying to help an elderly person, or as the result of a financial responsibility that you are obliged to take on, to help a relative.

Good Tidings

During the afternoon, however, the situation that bothered you in the morning should subside, leaving you in a happier frame of mind to enjoy the good tidings that are brought into your home by a child, or by a newly-engaged couple.

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As the result of the Mercury-Neptune opposition at 7:11 A.M. on Wednesday, the 24th, something that is said or written might start a false rumor. This could easily be squelched in the afternoon, when the Moon-Mercury sextile is effect, preceded by the Moon-Neptune trine. Unless the wrong impression is erased quickly and completely, it might cause emotional depression or heartache in the evening, when the Moon and Pluto are opposed.

Contentment

A sense of contentment should prevail on the 25th, since most of the aspects are favorable, or neutral. The same celestial serenity continues throughout Friday, the 26th, augmented by the exhilarating vibratory influence of the Mercury-Pluto trine during the evening. This aspect is favorable for personal popularity, and for entering a radio or other prize-winning quiz.

Stage, Radio, and Screen Stars Who Celebrate Their Birthdays During May

Brian Aherne	May	2,	1902
Don Ameche	May	31,	1910
Anne Baxter	May	7,	1923
Perry Como	May	18,	1913
Gary Cooper	May	17,	1901
Joe Cotton	May	15,	1910
Jeanne Crain	May	25,	1925
Jimmy Ellison	May	4,	1910
Glenn Ford	May	1,	1916
Benny Goodman	May	30,	1909
Ross Hunter	May	6,	1920
Paul Lukas	May	26,	1895
Margo	May	10,	1917
John Payne	May	28,	1911
Tyrone Power	May	15,	1914
Ginny Simms	May	25,	1916
Kate Smith	May	1,	1909
Margaret Sullivan	May	16,	1911

A monolgist, or a juvenile star, might make a spectacular hit at fund-raising rally for a children's hospital. Care must be taken, however, that the youthful prodigy is not exploited, as might be possible due to the deceptive influences indicated by the Mercury-Neptune parallel about a half hour before midnight.

On the 27th, 28th, and 29th of April the vibratory influences are average in power, and of comparatively short effect, inasmuch as all of them are produced by the usual lunar squares, sextiles, trines, and oppositions with the minor and major Planets.

Then, on the final day of April, the Sun and Pluto are in square aspect. This con-

(Continued on page 86)

To People who want to write *but can't get started*

Do you have that constant urge to write but the fear that a beginner hasn't a chance Then listen to what the editor of Liberty said on this subject:

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ILL WIND FOR MATT, UNTIL...
SHE'S OUT COLD
LETS GET GOING FAST. THAT GAS TANK MAY BLOW ANY SECOND!
WITH HIS SHOW STORM-BOUND, MATT HALE, YOUNG OWNER OF HALE'S MAMMOTH CIRCUS EFFECTS A THRILLING RESCUE
YOU TOOK A TALL CHANCE. MATT. PUT HER ON THE LOUNGE
OKAY, DOC. SHE'S YOUR PATIENT
YOU'RE A LUCKY GIRL. NOT A SCRATCH
THE STORM'S OVER... BUT WHAT A MESS. WE'LL WORK ALL NIGHT IF WE HAVE A SHOW TOMORROW
WAS THAT NEW AERIALIST ON THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN?
THAT'S ONE ON YOU MATT. SHE'S THE GIRL YOU PULLED FROM THE CAR
SHOW TIME
YOU'RE A PLUCKY KID — SURE YOU CAN DO YOUR STUFF?
OH, I'M OKAY NOW... THANKS TO YOU
NOT MUCH TIME TO CLEAN UP, MR. HALE. "SPEC" STARTS IN 15 MINUTES
SOME BLADE, PIKE! MOST REFRESHING SHAVE I EVER HAD!
THAT'S A THIN GILLETTE. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN AND EASY-SHAVING
YOUNG LADY, YOU'RE TERRIFIC. CONSIDER YOURSELF ONE OF US
I THINK I'M GOING TO LIKE THIS SHOW
MY HE'S SWELL-LOOKING
A THIN GILLETTE SHAVE DOES A LOT FOR A MAN
YOU GET FAST, SMOOTH SHAVES THAT MAKE YOU LOOK IN THE PINK AND FEEL THAT WAY TOO, WHEN YOU USE THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE THE KEENEST, LONGEST-LASTING BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICED FIELD. ALSO THEY FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY AND PROTECT YOU FROM THE IRRITATION OF MISFIT BLADES. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES
THIN Gillette BLADES
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"You must be Miss Gayle," the red-haired man said. "My grandmother is expecting you"

Heart in Her Hand

By MONA FARNSWORTH

Heather Gayle flees from the mad New York social whirl and heads for Maine to be a sweet old lady's companion, but she finds that she cannot isolate herself from love!

CHAPTER I

The Runaway

HEATHER walked down the road with the letter to Mrs. Sears in the pocket of her tweed suit and seventeen cents in her smart alligator bag. The bag had cost well over eighty dollars in Saks Fifth Avenue, and the seventeen cents rattled around in it strangely. But the die was cast now. She couldn't turn back and get anywhere on seventeen cents.

There was nothing to do but keep walking toward Haverley House. The man at the station had said it was two miles from there and she had been walking a good half hour, so it couldn't be far now.

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She trudged on, pulling her mind as hard as she could away from all thought of Toby. It was like pretending that she could stop the beat of her heart. But there was no changing Toby, so all she could do was hide herself and forget all about him. And the advertisement had said that Haverley House was completely isolated, hidden in tall pines.

The mere thought of forgetting Toby Van Dorn was like a dirge inside her, but she clamped her teeth and held her head high so tears couldn't spill over. She had to forget Toby *now*.

The dust was turning to sand and the smell of the sea was sharp in the air. Pines rose thick on all sides and the underbrush was a mat of sweet fern and bayberry bushes and scrub pine. Then the small forest cleared, sand dunes billowed, the Atlantic stretched far and away and, straight ahead of her, was the causeway that was the only connection between Haverley House and the mainland.

Heather stood looking at the narrow wooden walk, with the two thin hand rails. It stretched out to an island of perhaps a half mile in diameter, with nothing but trees visible, except the tops of brick chimneys in the center. But no smoke was rising from them.

Looking at the woods and the empty ocean, feeling the utter loneliness, Heather had a moment of misgiving. Just what was she getting herself into? Was she being foolhardy? Worse, was she being a coward to run away because she knew if she stayed much longer anywhere near tall, broad, blond Toby Van Dorn, where she could hear his voice go teasing and laughing and tender, know the electric wonder that was always thrilling between them, she would never be able to run away. And she had to. For the sake of her happiness and peace of mind!

FIRMLY, determinedly, she started across the causeway.

Haverley House was large, square, and built of logs. It so merged into tall pines that Heather had nearly reached it before she saw a carelessly kept clearing with a few splashes of bright flowers here and there, and realized she had reached the end of her journey.

Then, almost at her shoulder a man spoke.

"You must be Miss Gayle. My grandmother is expecting you. I'll take you to her."

Heather turned—and stared. A man, young, red-headed, wearing paint-smeared corduroys and holding a palette in his hand, stood there beside a small easel on which sat a half-finished canvas. He had a black beret pulled over one eye, a long black cigarette holder clamped in his teeth, and a wide grin.

"Don't look so astonished," he said. "It's neither polite nor flattering. And when you have applied for the job of companion to a person like my grandmother, manners are essential. So pretend that somewhere you have before seen a man as breathtakingly handsome as I."

Heather laughed. "I'm sorry," she said. "It's not that you're so handsome—"

"Oh, it isn't?" His grin widened. "At least you should have had the grace not to point it out to me."

"It's just"—Heather finished her interrupted sentence firmly—"that you're here at all. Your grandmother—Mrs. Sears *is* your grandmother, I suppose—wrote me that she and your grandfather were living here alone, which was why she felt she needed young companionship. But if you're here, she has it already."

"Oh"—he waved a hand holding a bunch of brushes—"having me around is just as good as being alone. I'm five times worse than nobody."

With another wave of his hand he led the way toward the house.

Heather followed, up the wide steps and across the veranda. The young man opened the door for her.

"Your luggage is at the station, I suppose," he said. "Heavens knows when you'll get it. Grand sends in for nothing until he runs out of tobacco. Then we put in supplies—sometimes once in three months."

He crossed a wide, shadowed hallway and opened a door. A big moose head raised proud antlers on the dark hardwood walls and rag rugs made bright pools of color on the floor. Then Heather stepped into the bright room beyond.

It was filled with color and sunlight. Red geraniums were banked in the wide window, canaries trilled in twin cages, there was beautiful old mahogany and shining brass and copper and, even on this August day, a fire of white birch logs crackled in the brick fireplace.

In front of the fire, sitting with her back to the door and with her head tilted gently against the high back of her straight, tall chair, sat a little old lady. Silver ringlets

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It was as if Heather were in a dream, with nothing alive in her but her heart

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on either side of her small pink and white face caught the firelight. For a moment Heather thought she was asleep since her eyes were closed. Then she saw a heap of soft mauve wool in the old lady's lap and realized that she was knitting furiously.

The red-haired young man crossed the room and chucked his grandmother under the chin.

"Here she is, Grandy." He raised his voice to almost a shout. "The young lady who's going to save you from complete boredom."

Mrs. Sears opened her eyes, then rose to her feet. The knitting fell and her ball of wool rolled off into a corner. But she paid it no mind.

"My dear!" She caught Heather's hands and shook them with a hearty flutter. "My dear child! I'm so glad you've come! And you are pretty! At the very last minute I was afraid you wouldn't be. But you are, aren't you? Isn't she pretty, Ricci?"

The young man looked at Heather. His grin widened.

"Yes," he shouted at his grandmother, "she's very pretty." And then, under his breath he said, "Pretty, my eye! After the slurs you cast at my looks wouldn't I be a fool really to think you were pretty! But you have to please the aged."

The old lady cocked an eye at him. "What are you muttering about?" she wanted to know.

"Nothing," said Ricci. "Shall I show Miss Gayle her room?"

THE room was lovely. Heather and Ricci stood in the doorway and looked at it. Wide windows that seemed to take in the whole of the Atlantic were frothed in dotted Swiss, and bright rag rugs were splashed on the darkly polished floor. A four-posted bed of mellow maple stood in the corner, a highboy flanked one wall and lowboy the other while a sea chest, its brass polished and shining sat at the foot of the bed.

"Like it?" asked Ricci and added with mock politeness, "We trust, Miss Gayle, that you will be very happy here."

Heather flicked her lashes at him. "And I trust, Mr. Sears, that I shall give complete satisfaction as your grandmother's companion."

He grinned. "With that exchange of pleasantries," he said, "I shall leave you. Only I must correct a slight error. The name is not Sears. It is de Deseto." He bowed, removing an imaginary plumed hat with a flourish. "Riccardo de Deseto—completely at your service."

Heather answered his grin doubtfully. "You mean Mr. and Mrs. Sears are your grandparents because their daughter married a man named de Deseto?" she asked.

"They never had a daughter," said Ricci. "Neither did they ever have a son. I'm all there is—and they picked me up on the beach after a storm that must have wrecked whatever ship I was on. Anyhow, nothing was ever heard of anything and the Sears kept me and brought me up because of my very winsome ways." He chuckled. "Don't you think, Miss Gayle, that I have very winsome ways?"

Heather laughed merrily. He had such a delightfully silly way of saying things, his blue eyes were so sparkling, his grin so jolly. She was glad she had met him.

"Winsome is no word for the ways you have," she said.

He bent toward her. "Can you think of a better one?" he asked eagerly.

"Well—" She pursed up her lips to indicate thought; she cocked her head on one side to indicate consideration. Her eyes sparkled at him.

He reached out suddenly and grabbed her hands.

"Gosh, you're wonderful!" he said.

His hands were tightening. Without a doubt he was going to kiss her and, surprised, Heather realized she didn't care.

Then, across the stillness of the forest and above the distant murmur of the sea, there sounded a motor horn. It was loud, urgent.

It whipped an instant response into Ricci. He dropped Heather's hands. His head lifted. Then, with no word of excuse or apology, he turned and leaped down the stairs.

"Well!" said Heather.

Slightly indignant, and decidedly curious, she went into her room.

She had forgotten that she was an employe, but now she realized with a start that she was not visiting the home of a friend and could act as she wished. Heather told herself that she should be more circumspect. This position called for dignity, not fraternization with members of the household.

But Ricci had been charming. He plainly had a way with the girls, and he knew it. Next time Heather must be careful.

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CHAPTER II

Kiss in the Shadows

AT HAVERLEY HOUSE the dining room was a square room with a smoke-blackened fireplace and beautiful mahogany furniture that gleamed and shone in the light from tall white candles. A low bowl of roses was in the center of the table and silver glittered.

But as Heather stood in the doorway, she saw all this only as a background for the gigantic, splendid man who sat at the head of the table. Caleb Sears was nearly eighty and his hair, thick and reaching nearly to his shoulders, was silver-white. His eyes were blue and far-reaching, for he had spent his youth on a whaler and his later years with the cod fishermen off Gloucester.

His hands, for all he was such a big, raw-boned man, were well-shaped, and no matter what he touched, even the salt and pepper shakers, he touched with tenderness. There was a gentle lift to his broad shoulders too, and the light on his venerable face seemed to Heather like the light that must have touched the face of the saints.

As Heather paused in the doorway he rose to his feet with grave dignity.

"My dear child"—he held out his hand and smiled gently—"you are just as lovely as Abigail, my wife, said you were. Welcome to Haverley House."

"Thank you," said Heather.

She seemed fairly to feel the personality of the man. Such tranquility she had never seen.

"Come child," he said, "you must eat. Ricci—Where is Ricci?"

"I'm here, sir!" Ricci's voice, from the doorway, had a triumphant note that brought old Caleb's and Heather's heads around.

Ricci was standing in the doorway, beside the most gorgeous blonde Heather had ever seen. The girl was almost as tall as Ricci, and statuesque. Her hair was a warm gold, her eyes were violet, and her skin a pale gold flushed with rose. Her lips and figure were something to dream about.

Ricci had his arm around her, holding her as close as dignity permitted.

Heather suddenly felt sick. She couldn't imagine why—hunger maybe. But blindly she wanted to get away where she wouldn't have to look at Ricci, his face so high-lighted with pride, and his arm around this girl.

"Grand, this is Vera," Ricci said ringingly. "She's come home!"

The old man's calm eyes held nothing but gentle inquiry.

"Home?" he questioned. "You mean, this is her home?"

"Of course!" Ricci was jubilant. "She's come to marry me!"

Everything inside of Heather seemed to drain out. She certainly *must* be hungry!

Old Caleb nodded his silver head slowly. "I see." His tone was thoughtful and gentle. "I remember now. She is the girl who refused to marry you before because you wished to live here with us, and it was impossible for her to live anywhere but in the exciting atmosphere of New York. What has made her change her mind?"

"She loves me," said Ricci. "She found she couldn't live without me, so she came back."

"I see," said old Caleb. At last he moved his eyes from Ricci's face and let them rest on Vera. "And so you are sure now, my dear, that you wish to make this your home?"

"I love Ricci," said Vera. "And I want to be where he is more than I want anything else in the world."

Ricci beamed. The old man nodded. Heather got up from the table suddenly.

"If you'll excuse me," she murmured, "I'll go help in the kitchen."

She almost ran through a swing door. As it flapped behind her she found herself in the large neat-as-a-pin kitchen. Red-checked gingham curtains fluttered at the windows, red geraniums bloomed in boxes. The oil lamp swinging above the table threw out a warm circle of light that left the corners still full of shadows.

Mrs. Sears was bustling around like a disturbed hen.

"My dear child!" she exclaimed, when she saw Heather. "You needn't have come out to help—not on your first night anyway. Maybe later, if you really want to." Then her bright eyes noticed Heather's face. "Is anything wrong? Are you sick?"

HEATHER started to speak, then remembered the old lady was deaf. She couldn't shout, so all she said was, "I'm fine. What do I take in?"

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The old lady beamed and patted her hand, then waved toward a serving table. There was a great platter of baby lobster and another heaped high with corn. There were dishes of pickles and a quivering heap of currant jelly that looked like a great pigeon-blood ruby. And finally there was a wooden bowl covered with a snowy napkin, and holding golden brown biscuits, so flaky and tender that it seemed a good breath would blow them away.

Heather carried them all in, not looking at Ricci, not looking at Vera. When she came in with the last load Mrs. Sears followed her. And the instant she saw Vera she stopped dead.

"Grandy," Ricci said, "this is Vera. She's come back."

Instantly the old lady's face changed. Her sweet mouth went to a thin line. Her merry dark eyes went sharp.

"Oh," she said tartly, "so this is Vera, is it?" Then she remembered her manners. "Well," she snapped, "lay a place for her, can't you? She'll have supper with us, won't she?"

Ricci's head went up. "You don't understand, Grandy," he shouted. "She's going to marry me and live here."

Grandy acted as if she had heard nothing. In silence she went on serving supper and gradually her mouth softened and the usual twinkle came into her eyes. Several times through the meal she glanced at Heather and once Heather was sure she saw her wink. Though of course, she realized, she must be mistaken. Little old ladies don't go around winking mischievously at girls they've just hired as companions.

That night Heather couldn't sleep. Perhaps it was the sound of the rising wind, or the murmur of the pines. Perhaps it was the creakings of the old house. Anyway all she could see was the adoring light in Ricci's eyes as he had looked at Vera. And that made Heather mad. Why should she care? She was here to forget Toby. Why waste her thoughts on Ricci?

With a definite sense of shock, she realized that this actually was the first time she had thought of Toby since she had crossed the bridge to the island. Was forgetting him going to be easier than she had thought? She hoped so.

Five minutes later, wrapped in a padded dressing gown and with her feet poked into huaraches she went quietly down the stairs. The sea and the whispering pines called her, and if she could sit quietly for a little while with the wind blowing around her maybe she could go to sleep.

But she had forgotten what unreliable things huaraches were. She was half-way down the stairs when the one on her left foot slipped off and, with bumps and taps and rattles, finished the flight long before she did.

Appalled at the noise, Heather listened. There was no sound. So she ran down the rest of the stairs, found her huaraches, slipped it on and let herself quietly out of the house.

The night was lovely. A late full moon was rising so there was a blur of light everywhere. The wind was clear and fresh, and scudding wracks of cloud made a veil over the stars. Slowly Heather began to walk down a path toward the sea.

She was just passing through a pool of shadow when she felt arms around her, felt herself turned swiftly and then the deep, eager pressure of lips on hers. It was a long kiss—and Heather was able to do nothing to stop it. It was as if she were in a dream, her arms, her hands limp, nothing alive in her but her heart and the electric thrill that rioted in her veins.

Then he let her go. "Darling"—his voice was soft but easily recognized. "I heard you go downstairs. I knew you'd come out, hoping to meet me. You did, didn't you?"

"No," said Heather clearly. "I came out because I couldn't sleep."

"Miss Gayle!" Ricci's breath seemed to go out of him. "I thought—I was sure . . . Well, I guess I owe you an apology. I'm sorry—" He stopped. Then, quietly, he said, "No, I don't think I am sorry."

"Let's skip it," said Heather. She stepped out into the pale moonlight. "A beautiful night, isn't it?" she asked, so serenely that he couldn't possibly guess how her veins were still sparkling from the touch of his lips on hers, and how her breath was like a shaking feather in her throat.

"If you want to see something really lovely," he said, "let's go down to the rocks and look at the ocean. The big combers rolling in, the froth of white crashing against the rocks, the glowing haze of phosphorescence. Ever watched it?"

Heather never had, so they went down. They sat on the rocks with the stars and the night sky above them and the tumbling, dark, strangely gleaming ocean at their feet.

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They talked in low voices because to speak louder would have been like shouting in a cathedral.

AS SHE sat there, Heather wanted to reach out and touch Ricci. She wanted to curl her fingers around his, wanted to rest against his shoulder. Nonsense, of course! So a little breathlessly she began to talk about Toby.

"I've come up here to forget him," she explained. "Because I can't marry him and—and I love him."

"You love him?"

Ricci's voice sounded surprised and a little dismayed. If she loved Toby, how could she have kissed Ricci the way she had?

"Yes, I love him," she said, her voice firm.

"Well you needn't sound so mad about it," said Ricci. "Why can't you marry him?"

"Because if I did my life would be a perfect glorified Hades!"

Fury swept over her, the way it always did when she thought too deeply about Toby.

"All right, go on," said Ricci. "It sounds interesting."

"It's not interesting—it's terrible," said Heather. "But anyway, this is how it is. Toby is the son of the man my mother married five years ago. Toby and his father are both gay and carefree and as handsome as Apollo. They're romantic and devoted and look at you as if you were the only woman in all eternity—which is fine 'till you discover that they look at every woman the same way. And I'm not having any. I've watched my mother go all through it with Toby Senior, and one in the family is enough. I'm going to forget Toby Junior if I have to take my heart out and eat it."

"I see," said Ricci. "Do you figure it will really be as bad as all that?"

Heather opened her mouth to say it would. But she never got the words out because, in a sudden rush, she realized two things. The first was that only once—and only fleetingly—had she thought of Toby since she had arrived at this house. The other was that no kiss of Toby's had ever stayed on her lips, clinging, palpitating, as Ricci's kiss still lay on hers. And Ricci madly in love with Vera!

Heather stood up suddenly.

"I think I'll go back to the house," she said and went, clambering up the rocks and fleeing up the path.

A fine thing it would be, she thought when she flung herself into bed, for her to come up here to forget Toby, and fall in love with a man who was crazy about somebody else! So she shoved all thought of Ricci out of her mind and counted sheep with furious determination until she went to sleep.

CHAPTER III

Startling Discovery

NEXT morning when Heather awoke the sun was pouring in her east window and there was a gentle clatter of pots and pans from the kitchen. Instantly Heather remembered. She was no guest in this house; she was an employe. She had better get down and see just what her job entailed.

She put on her brown tweed skirt and a gay yellow sweater, then remembered the letter in her jacket pocket. She hadn't had to use it, after all. There'd been no question as to whom she was so she hadn't had to prove it by Mrs. Sears' letter. No, they had just opened their arms and drawn her into the family circle as if she were a long-lost daughter.

When she went downstairs, Grandy was turning flannel cakes on a big griddle, coffee was settling slowly in a big Silex, ham was curling in a frying pan, and the odor in the kitchen was out of this world. Heather cried a gay good morning, and went on in to set the table.

Vera was not visible. She continued to be not visible and breakfast went on without her. In the middle of the meal Ricci murmured something about Vera always having breakfast in bed.

"In this house, unless we're ill, we eat at the table," Grand said mildly, and went on disposing of his griddlecakes.

Gradually, Heather found that her duties as "companion" to Grandy amounted to nothing more than being a kind of daughter in the house. Apparently the old lady had just got a bee in her bonnet that it would be nice to have some girl around to talk to. Apparently dignified, quiet Grand and Ricci were not enough. So Grandy had hired a companion.

Heather's days were filled with learning how to make doughnuts and helping to make the beds; dusting the lovely old mahogany

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furniture and weeding the gay flower beds.

But though she kept carefully out of Vera's and Ricci's way, she couldn't help but be aware of everything that went on. And she knew that Vera, arrogant and imperious, was riding Ricci to a fare-thee-well. When Vera discovered that she was expected to get up, get dressed and appear for breakfast, she definitely blew her top. She ended her tirade by demanding to know what they thought she was.

"Just a human being," Grand said gently. "Just like all the rest of us."

Heather thought for a moment that Vera would actually explode into little pieces. But she didn't. Ricci smoothed it over somehow, but it was a long time before Vera smiled.

There was a good deal of this kind of thing, and as the days grew into weeks, Ricci began to look worn, and his eyes held a haunted light.

Once when Heather had gone to the garden to pick some corn for supper he followed her. For several minutes he picked at her side silently. The tall corn rustled above their heads, the sun was hot, and the salt breeze cool. Heather kept her mind on the job.

Finally Ricci said, "Heather, don't you think when two people love each other that they're a lot more apt to quarrel before they're married than after?"

"I don't think so at all," said Heather. "People who love each other—*really* love each other—don't quarrel. At least they don't get petty and bickering."

She turned around and walked off, with her full basket of corn. Her own anger surprised her. What was she angry about? And that weight on her heart as Ricci had talked? What did she think Ricci had followed her down to the garden for? Exactly! To ask her advice about Vera was the only possible thing he could have followed her for.

"Stop being a sap, you little fool," she told herself. "And get on with shucking that corn."

The next morning a letter came for Vera. It was a big square envelope, addressed in a large, firm, masculine hand, and on the flap it said, in heavily embossed type:

Courtlandt Brooks
8 East 83rd Street

Heather stood gazing at the letter for several long moments her curiosity aroused.

HEATHER laid the letter beside Vera's place at the table. She hoped she would be around when Vera saw it. She was curious to know just what it might mean to Vera.

Ricci came into the room. He was restless, for though everyone else was up and stirring, Vera was still asleep.

"Grand come back from town?" he asked. "Any mail?"

"Not much," Heather said. "The papers and a few letters. Nothing for you."

She hoped he wouldn't see Vera's letter. She didn't want him hurt any more, and she had a feeling that Courtlandt Brook's letter would bring him no peace. But before she could divert his attention, he saw it.

"For Vera! She'll like to receive mail. Why don't you take it up to her?" He picked it up, and his eye lit on the embossed name.

And at that second Vera came into the room.

"Don't tell me there's actually mail come into this place!" she snapped. "That *couldn't* be a letter you're holding!"

Ricci held it out to her, his eyes lifting to her face. A beautiful, golden face that became glorified when she saw the handwriting.

"Courtlandt!" she cried. "Oh, I knew he would write if I came up here! I just *knew* it!" She ripped open the envelope and burst into triumphant laughter. "He wants me to come back to New York! How perfectly, divinely—"

She broke off, suddenly remembering where she was, to whom she was talking to. But the shine of victory was still clear in her eyes.

"Ricci—" She tried to control her voice, to make it properly regretful. It wasn't such a good try. "Ricci, you won't mind if I go down to New York for a few days, will you? Things have come up that seem to require my presence."

"I can see that," said Ricci, his voice dry and flat, his eyes steadily on her face. "Of course go down to New York. But don't try to kid me any more. I can add two and two. So the only reason you came up here was to use me as bait to bring another man to time. All right—you've brought him."

Suddenly his composure broke. Rage rose like a crimson flood.

"Get out of here!" he cried at her. "Get out! Go back to any man you want to, but never let me set eyes on you again!"

He strode out of the room. A minute later the door slammed, then Heather saw him

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vanish into the pines.

An hour later Vera departed in her yellow roadster. Grandy and Heather were making doughnuts.

Grand was reading the paper. No one paid any attention.

Two days later Heather decided something would have to be done about Ricci. It was not that he looked especially grief-stricken or heart-broken. It was just that he kept wandering around like a lost dog and it seemed to Heather that in all common decency she should offer him the right hand of fellowship. Or something.

So at breakfast that third morning, she said:

"Ricci—do something for me? I've been wanting to go over to the other island ever since I've been here. It's a beautiful day. Do you suppose we could take a picnic lunch and row over?"

His face blazed with such a joyful light that she burst out laughing.

"Would you?" he said. "And say! Would you let me paint you? I've been wanting to paint you ever since you came here. We'll do it today!" He looked at her, half closing his eyes to get every bit of color value. "Amber hair," he murmured, "tawny skin, and chestnut eyes." Suddenly he opened his own eyes wide. "Do you know you're beautiful?"

Heather laughed. He seemed so surprised, so delighted with his discovery.

"My dear boy," she said, "who could have told you!"

They had a wonderful day. The sunlight was pure gold, the sky pure azure. The pines on the little island sent out gusts of perfume and the breeze was cool and salty. They went in swimming in a small sunlit cove that was paved with golden sand and lay on the beach afterward talking lazily.

After lunch—fried chicken, lobster salad, thin lettuce sandwiches and coffee in a thermos—Ricci got down to painting. All afternoon Heather sat on the rocks with sky and tossing sea and piling clouds in back of her while he worked. She watched his face, watched the light on his red hair, the intent look in his eyes, and the clever way his hands moved from palette to canvas.

SUDDENLY she knew she had never been happier in her life. She knew that this moment, with the rocks and sun and solitude the murmuring pines—Ricci—held all she wanted or ever would want.

And suddenly she was frightened. So terrified that her hands shook and her heart trembled. She loved Ricci! Probably had ever since he had kissed her on her first night here. That was why she had been able to forget Toby so easily, Toby who was a h a n d s o m e, fascinating flash-in-the-pan. Toby had never mattered much anyhow. Toby had cast a kind of spell over her. But this was love!

"Ricci—Ricci," she said softly, and though her voice was no more than a whisper he looked up. Their eyes held and it seemed to Heather that all the air was gold between them. Then her fright, that for a second had been burned away in this wonder, came back. She tore her eyes away and felt the hot blood burn her cheeks.

She was mad to let herself go like this. Was she going to be content with playing second fiddle to Vera? Was she going to catch Ricci on the rebound? Certainly *not!*

She clenched her hands and bit her soft lips, but there was nothing more than this she could do about it. She had to sit still while Ricci painted her, loving him as she

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did in this sudden stupendous way and knowing that he wasn't even aware of her, that all that counted now was his work.

At last Ricci sighed deeply and stepped back from his easel. The sun was pretty low and he cocked a surprised eye at it. Contrition swept over his face.

"I've kept you posing too long, Heather. Can you ever forgive me!"

"There's nothing to forgive," said Heather quietly, and how could he know that she was not answering his remark at all but all the surging grief of her own troubled heart?

Of course there was nothing to forgive. It was not Ricci's fault she had fallen in love with him, so much that she would have walked on red-hot sword blades from here to the moon for him.

Quietly she helped him pile the luncheon basket and his painting stuff into the dory. He was bubbling over with enthusiasm about the job he had done and talked of nothing else, though he wouldn't show her even a glimpse of the canvas.

"I've got to work it over," he said. "I'll show it to you when it's finished."

"All right," she said, and climbed into the dory.

It was part way home that he discovered, through the veil of his own enthusiasm and gay talk, how still she was. He leaned on the oars and looked at her.

"Heather, you are tired. I made you do too much."

"No, you didn't," said Heather. "I loved doing it all. Really. It's just . . . Oh, go on rowing, Ricci and let's get home!"

He went on rowing but his eyes were deeply thoughtful and he stopped talking.

CHAPTER IV

The Awakening

IT WAS not until Ricci and Heather had beached the dory and were about to load themselves up with lunch basket and paints that he told her what was on his mind. He caught her shoulders and turned her so he could see her eyes.

"Heather," he said, his voice choked, "I'm going to do something and—and I beg you to understand. I love you. I think I've loved you ever since the first minute I saw you, but—but—"

"Vera confused you. Is that it?"

Heather spoke as coolly as she could. She had to because if Ricci once guessed how she was trembling, how every bit of her was going to soft jelly, then he would know she loved him. And he mustn't. Because he didn't love her. Not really. He was hurt, lonely, disillusioned, and he needed the comfort she could give him. That was all. It wasn't love.

"I deserved that jab about Vera," Ricci said gravely. "But it's not true. I fell in love with you before she came back. I fell in love with you the night I kissed you—though I didn't know it for a long while."

"For a man who was in love with me," said Heather lightly, "you looked pretty delighted when Vera showed up."

"That was my pride. She had given it an awful kick when she told me at Bar Harbor—I'd gone there to sell some of my paintings—that she wouldn't live here. Ours had been a whirlwind courtship and then she wouldn't live where I had to live."

"Why?" asked Heather. "Why do you have to live here?"

He stared at her, surprised. "Because Grand and Grandy need me—and after all they've done for me, do you think I'd walk out on them?"

"No, of course you wouldn't," Heather said, and loved him more for being the kind of man who wouldn't do such a thing even when his love pulled him.

"So," said Ricci, "do you understand? Can you believe that I love you and don't love Vera? And can you—love me just a little, to start with?"

His eyes were deep on hers, his hands warm on her shoulders and Heather felt herself slipping. It would be so easy to believe. And so wonderful. Just close her eyes, lift her lips—and then all her life wonder if Ricci told the truth, or whether he just thought he was, and would be sorry all the rest of his life.

She took a step away from him—and saw the man watching them from the rocks above. She stood stock-still, staring.

"Toby!" she gasped. "*Toby!* Where in the world did you come from?"

Toby grinned, as only Toby could. "If that fellow is through trying to make love to you," he said, "and if you really want to know, I'll tell you."

Ricci's eyes went from Heather to Toby

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and back again. Toby up there on the rocks looking like a young sun god, mocking and handsome and sure of himself, and Heather, surprised, but with her eyes shining.

Without a word, Ricci picked up his easel and paints and began to climb the rocks. Heather followed with the lunch basket.

"Make it fast, darling," Toby said. "It's a spot on the late side and I've promised Felicia to get her back to a hotel for dinner."

"Felicia!" said Heather. "Is she here?"

They had reached the top of the rocks and there was no need for anyone to answer Heather's question. She could see for herself. There was the familiar big Packard with Toby Senior at the wheel and there, reclining on a fluff of pillows and looking like some delicate tropical flower, was Felicia. Heather ran to her.

"Mother! You're not well? Why are you here like this? Is something wrong?"

"I've nearly died." Felicia's voice was faint, but it still held the lovely lilt it always did. "I've been so frantic about you. Oh, darling, why did you do it?"

"I left a note, dear," Heather said. "I told you I'd be all right. I—I just had to get away, that's all."

Felicia's sigh was delicate and lovely. "So much trouble and worry," she murmured, "just to satisfy a small whim of a small girl."

"It wasn't a small whim, Mother," Heather said. "It was a very big problem, and this was my way of settling it. That's all."

FELICIA smiled. It made dimples twinkle here and there around her mouth and it made her eyes look like violet pools. Felicia had learned years before that all the world melted when she smiled. So she smiled now.

"Well, it's over," she said easily. "We've come for you and we'll take you home, and I shall be well again." Her voice trembled a little on the last words, which was a touching way she had when she wanted her own way. It fooled no one. In fact it always made Heather mad. It made her mad now.

"But Mother, I'm not—" she said, and stopped. She had nearly said she wasn't going home.

But why not? What good would it do to stay here? She would see Ricci every day and maybe he would keep on telling her he loved her, and maybe not. If he did she probably would give in. How could she help it? Then, if his love for her were only a rebound, as she feared, there would come a day when both of them would know it. And her heartbreak then would be a thousand times worse than any wrench now would be.

"All right," she said dully. "I'll go home. I'll go up and pack my bags and say good-by."

"Don't bother, darling," said Felicia. "There can't be anything here that you really need. Just tell them to throw it all away and we'll buy new."

Heather smiled. That was always Felicia's solution for everything—throw the whole thing away and buy something new. All right. She didn't care. But she had to say good-by to Grand and Grandy.

She found them in the dining room. Grand was reading by the window and Grandy was arranging flowers in a low bowl.

"My family have come to take me home," she said, not daring to think what the words really meant. "I've got to go. My mother's ill. Oh!" Her voice broke, suddenly, unexpectedly, "Oh, I'm so terribly sorry to go! I love you all so much!"

She flung her arms around Grandy and clung. Then there was a blur of talking, of exclamations and regrets, of Grandy hugging her close and Grand kissing her gently on the forehead.

When she went out again Ricci was standing by the car talking to Toby Senior. Toby Junior was walking up and down restlessly. Toby always wanted to get going somewhere.

Heather walked toward them. The sunshine was a blur, and her heart had no feeling at all.

"Good-by, Ricci," she said. "Everything's been wonderful." She choked then, and couldn't say any more. But what else was there to say anyhow?

She got into the back seat with Felicia who talked lightly and gaily of a thousand things. When Felicia got her way, she always chattered like a happy magpie. Heather paid no attention to her. She paid no attention to anything.

Once she lifted her eyes and looked thoughtfully at the back of Toby's head. Such a handsome head. The blond hair so tempting to your fingertips, the smooth line of the cheek and chin, the masculine, but tender, curve of the lips as he turned in profile to say something.

Heather didn't bother to hear what he said.

"This is the man I thought I loved," she was thinking. "This is the man I ran away from. This! Oh, Ricci—Ricci!"

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The apartment on Park Avenue was the same. The giant doorman with the bristling white mustachios waved them all in as if he were ushering royalty. The amber lights in the palatial foyer glowed dimly on Oriental rugs and carved teak. The elevator looked like a jewel case, complete with jewels.

Heather glanced around in dull surprise. How could it all be so unchanged when she had lived—and died—since she last saw it?

Trilby, with her pretty Irish face and neat uniform, opened the door for them and sparkled when she saw Heather.

"Miss Heather! Sure and it's a joy to lay eyes on you. Let me take your luggage."

"There's no luggage, Trilby," Heather said wearily. "There's no anything. I've just come home."

Life went on as if nothing had happened. Felicia bought Heather a lot of new clothes and Toby said that she was more beautiful than ever.

That night Heather looked into her mirror carefully and wondered how she could be. Cheeks so pale that rouge and lipstick only made them look paler, eyes deep with longing, with their violet shadows. Heather looked away again.

SHE had cried until there were no tears there to cry, and she had tried all the tricks she could think of to make her forget. She had talked to herself, scolded herself, told herself to be sensible. She didn't want Ricci, did she, unless he was all hers, beyond every shadow of a doubt? But how would she ever know, if she were here in New York and he was in Maine?

Oh, she'd never know! So the only thing she could do was give it up, give everything up— Oh, Ricci! Ricci—and concentrate on Toby.

There was still Toby. Toby everywhere she turned, these days. He practically never let her out of his sight. And as for looking at another girl, he didn't know another was alive.

"Darling," he had told her the first night they had dinner together after she came home—it was at the Stork, but he paid no more attention to the chatter and laughter than if they had been on a desert island—"darling, you're the only girl in the world for me. You know that, don't you? I found it out while you were gone."

"Did you?" she had said blankly, and thought how much it would have meant if Toby had said that to her two months ago before she had run away, before she had fallen in love with Ricci.

"Oh, I know we talked about getting married, and Dad and your mother thought it was a fine idea and all that," Toby said. "I guess we both knew we would sometime but, even though I kept telling you I loved you I couldn't seem to stop flirting with other girls."

"So I went away and left all the others a clear field," Heather said dryly.

"I thought that was why you went away," said Toby.

Heather stared at him. He certainly had changed. The old Toby would never have said a thing like that. The old Toby never did much thinking about anything. The old Toby had a whale of a good time, and let it go at that. But this new Toby . . . She kept on looking at him thoughtfully.

"I love you, Heather," Toby had said again.

Heather had said nothing, because she couldn't think of a single thing to say.

Tonight, she was going out to dinner with Toby again. She was wearing sapphire blue velvet, cut low, because Toby had asked her to. It just matched her eyes and it made her hair look soft and rich, like old gold.

She had just slipped the gown over her head, and was standing in front of the long mirror adjusting the folds when Felicia knocked lightly and came into the room. Felicia had on a froth of a rainbow negligee and her silvery gold hair lay like moonlight on her shoulders. She smiled happily when she saw Heather.

"You and Toby are dining out again," she said with satisfaction. "I'm glad. It's so much better than staying home and having dinner soberly with Toby Senior and me."

"Do you think so, Mother?" Heather said politely, and moved the sapphire velvet a little so that it lay more snugly at her hips.

"Heather," Felicia said, "you are going to marry Toby, aren't you?"

Heather did not answer. She fluffed her hair a little, then patted it smooth again. Heather knew Felicia would keep waiting, smiling sweetly and hopefully, until Heather answered her. So she turned and faced her mother.

"No," she said flatly. "I don't think I'll ever marry Toby."

"But you love him, don't you? You did once. You loved him terribly. And Heather, love doesn't change."

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"I know it doesn't," said Heather, "and that's why I know I never really loved Toby—because my feeling for him has changed."

Felicia moved her hands delicately. They looked like little moths fluttering against the lace of her negligee.

"Heather," she said, "this is all nonsense and you know it. Toby and you were made for each other. You've been brought up the same way with the same kind of background. You're accustomed to the same kind of life, you like the same things."

"Do we?" asked Heather. "Oh, we did—before the war. We liked to ski in Sun Valley and swim in Southampton. We liked to bake in the sun at Palm Springs and dance at Palm Beach. We were growing up then. You were trying to decide to marry Toby Senior, and he was trying to make you decide. But now I'm not so sure that Toby and I like the same things at all. Toby flew during the war, and I don't believe he's still the playboy he was. I know I—I *hate* the kind of life I lived then. I wouldn't go back to it for anything!"

"You hate it!" Felicia looked shocked, appalled. "You hate having a good time? Playing around? Why, darling! What else is life for? What else is there to do? And Toby—both the Tobys—have so much money, and I have money. There's certainly no need for anybody working."

"I know, dear."

HEATHER spoke gently, the way you would speak to a child who had lots of dolls to play with and couldn't see any sense in not just playing. You couldn't do much else with Felicia. You couldn't go off into a glory of description of how wonderful life was when you had work to do.

You couldn't even try to explain how marvelous it had been, up there at Grandy's, to scrub and polish the house and cook the meals and help with the mending and the gardening and the canning. You couldn't make Felicia understand how much more fun it had been to go out and haul in lobster pots with Grand than Sun Valley had ever been.

For a swift instant Heather let herself think of Ricci—Ricci working so hard, creating beauty with his paints and his brushes and his canvas. Ricci. Darling Ricci. Darling—darling—*darling* Ricci!

"I don't think Toby and I are in the least congenial any more," Heather said firmly. "And that is that. I'm sorry, darling, if you'd set your heart on anything else."

Felicia sighed and left the room. Heather sighed too.

CHAPTER V

"Come Home, Heather"

TOBY was waiting for Heather in the lovely powder blue and white and silver living room that Felicia had had decorated for the sole purpose of setting off her own delicate beauty. Toby was standing beside the white fireplace, complete with cool silver birch logs, and he looked like something straight out of *Esquire*. Heather thought impersonally that it would have been quite impossible for there to be a handsomer man than Toby.

He had been watching the doorway and the instant she appeared his smile went golden.

"Beautiful!" he said softly. "You're more beautiful each time I see you. Darling, I love you so much!"

He took her hands and she thought he was going to kiss her. But he didn't. He hadn't kissed her, not once, since she had come home. It was as if he were waiting for something and until it happened he would just make love to her with words and with his eyes.

So he dropped her hands and adjusted her cloak across her shoulders. The golden orchids he had given her just matched her hair.

Dinner was gay. They knew almost everyone at the Stork and there was lots of laughter and clinking of glasses. Heather laughed with the rest of them and she was a lot gayer than some. There was always a crowd around her table and dozens of people told her how wonderful it was to have her back again.

Heather smiled at them. Warmed by the excellent food, the Alexander she'd had before dinner, with the soft heat of the music flowing through her veins, and all this laughter sparkling around her, life didn't seem too difficult to take.

Later, in the taxi, Toby put it into words.

"You really had a good time tonight, didn't you, darling? Everything was just the way it used to be. Except . . . Heather, aren't you ever going to love me the way you did

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once?" His eyes were pleading, his mouth that of a small boy who wanted something very much.

Heather looked at him. Her heart moved a little. Was it with pity, because she could give him so little? Or was it the first stirrings of the old feeling for him? He must have seen the uncertainty, the almost yielding in her eyes for, with a quick, triumphant movement he reached out and gathered her into his arms.

He kissed her thoroughly. And Toby knew how. He had always kissed her a good deal—and he had kissed a lot of other girls too. Toby was a past master in the art. Besides, he was stuffed with charm, with so much magnetism that it was like wave after wave of sparkling electricity going through you. And Heather felt herself answering to it. She couldn't help it.

Or could she? Was she going to be swept off her feet by a mess of magnetism and charm? She pushed herself out of Toby's arms, straightened her hair, and took out her compact.

"Let's not go home now," she said. "I want to go somewhere and dance some more."

"Fine," said Toby. "So you are having a good time!"

Heather just went on fixing her lips. She was not going to keep on with this dancing business because she was having a good time. She was keeping on so she wouldn't have to go home right away.

She knew what might happen if she did. Felicia would be there, and Toby Senior. With the absolute gift Felicia had for sensing things, Heather might be railroaded into something it would be hard to get out of. So Heather was giving herself a breathing space. If she and Toby danced a while then she could pull herself together and decide whether she would let Toby succeed in this sweeping-off-the-feet act or not.

After talking it over, they went back to the Stork.

"But I've got to go straight into the powder room," said Heather. "In spite of all my efforts I must still look a mess."

"You're the most beautiful thing in the world," said Toby.

But she went into the powder room anyway. And there, at a mirror, tilting her lovely head so she could the better shape her perfect lips, was Vera.

Heather made a faint sound in her throat and Vera turned. She stared, her face growing blank, her violet eyes huge with astonishment.

"Heather! *Are* you Heather?"

"Yes, I'm Heather."

"Then what were you pulling? An act? Playing kitchen mechanic to the farm element? Or are you being Cinderella now?"

"Is that really any of your business?" Heather asked pleasantly.

"Yes, it is!" Amazingly Vera was angry. Why, Heather couldn't imagine. Though immediately Vera explained it. "When a man throws me down for another girl I'd like to know just who the girl is! So are you a little dishwasher—or what?"

HEATHER made no attempt to answer the question.

"What man threw you down?" she asked. "Courtlandt?"

"Courtlandt! You know him?"

"Of course I know him," said Heather. "Everybody knows him."

"Then," Vera said acidly, "it's astonishing you don't know that he's announcing his engagement to Madeleine Sprague—and after getting me to come all the way back from Maine too!"

Heather laughed. "You ought to know that means nothing to Courtlandt. He's dangled every beautiful girl in New York for a while. Once it was even thought he'd marry my mother."

"Your mother? You're not—you're not Heather Gayle?"

Still Heather was not bothering to answer questions.

"What man threw you down?" she asked. "That is, after Courtlandt decided to marry Madeleine?"

Vera pounded a white fist on the plate glass. Her temper that was always popping over something exploded.

"The fool!" she raged. "The big fool! I went all the way back to Maine. I told Ricci I'd marry him any time he wanted me to and he—he didn't want me! He said it was you and if he couldn't have you he didn't want anyone. He said—"

"Thanks! Thanks for telling me."

Heather wasn't waiting to hear any more. She'd heard enough. She whirled away—and stopped. Where could she go? What could she do? To go home, change her clothes and get money was unthinkable. There would be a scene. Felicia would have a fit.

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Even to go to Toby now would be too much. Toby would make a scene too. Toby would make love to her, plead, raise a fuss.

She ran out of the powder room and on out to the sidewalk. She hailed a cab and gave them Jane Bleeker's address. Jane had gone to Spence with Heather, and had come out with Heather. Jane's father was Wall Street, and he could cash any check Heather wanted to write. Also Jane knew how to keep her mouth shut.

So, two hours later, Heather walked across the immensity of Grand Central Station. Jane's bag was tucked under her arm, Jane's tweed suit swung against her legs. Jane's brown shoes were just a breath too large for her. But all in all everything was fine.

It stayed fine until, along toward the middle of the next afternoon, Heather found herself once more walking up the lonely country road. The odor of the pine trees was sharp on the cool autumn air and the dust underneath her feet was already more sand than earth.

But suddenly, as all these dear, familiar things came to her one by one, and as she came in sight of the long causeway and the island beyond, she got frightened. How had she dared dash up here like this? What would Ricci really say when he saw her? How could a girl go about telling a man she had heard he loved her, and did he?

Suppose he didn't! Suppose he had just told Vera that to get rid of her. Or suppose Vera had made it up just to make a fool of her. There had been practical jokes like that, and people thought them terribly funny.

As doubts pushed and pummeled at her Heather got more and more miserable. Twice she stopped, all but deciding to go back. Better to write to Ricci. Better to do anything than stick her neck out like this. Then she went on again. She had come this far. She would see it through.

She was half-way across the causeway when she saw him running toward her. His red hair was like a banner in the late gold sunlight and, even as far away as he was, she could see the glory in his face.

"You came back!" he called out to her. "You came back!"

Then he reached her. Both her hands were in his and the warmth of him was all through her, tingling, singing, beautiful.

"I met Vera last night," she said. "She told me—she told me—"

"What did she tell you?" Ricci said. "Repeat it, woman."

Heather laughed. Happiness made her voice shake.

"She told me you—you—"

"Go on," said Ricci. "Say it."

Heather took a deep breath and measured her words. "She told me that you—loved—me." She stopped waiting for Ricci to speak.

He chuckled. "Go on. You're doing fine. So then what? What has that to do with your being here?"

"Ricci!" Heather faintly stamped her foot. "Don't tease any more. You know why I'm here! You know I love you. You know I've come with my heart in my hand to—to give it to you!"

"Darling!" said Ricci, and all the love in the world was in his voice. "That's what I wanted you to say. That you loved me. That you forever and ever would always love me. Oh, Heather—Heather! I've nearly died since you went away!"

And then he kissed her. It was all the first kiss had been and a lot more beside. It was heaven and glory and peace and beauty and a singing perfection that left her weak and wondering. And then he kissed her some more and some more and some more.

"Darling, night is coming on," he finally said sadly. "We can't stay here forever on the causeway, and Grand and Grandy will be waiting. So come home, Heather."

"Wherever you want," said Heather, and slipped a small hand into his.

COMING NEXT MONTH

HOUSE O' DREAMS

Another Fascinating Complete Novelet

By MONA FARNSWORTH

PLUS MANY OTHER SCINTILLATING ROMANCES

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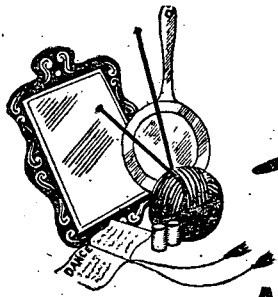
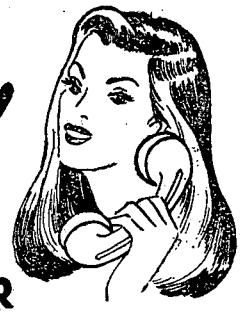


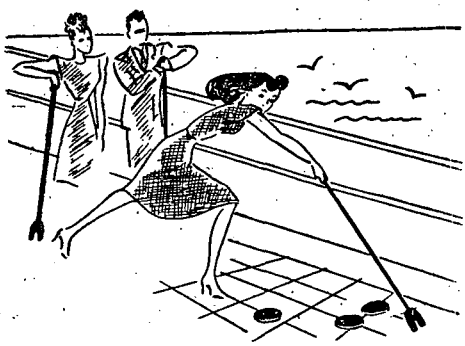
Listen, Girls!



A CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

NOW that travel restrictions have been somewhat eased, some lucky people will be globe-trotting again. But a good many of us will still go along in our work-a-day worlds—and pretend. You can have your own little game of make-believe by giving a Cruise Supper.

Deck the house with travel posters, pictures and such signs as No Dogs Aft, See Deck Steward for Chairs, Children not Allowed Near Rail and other signs that you usually encounter on board ship. Set up



games like Ring Toss, Shuffleboard and the horse-racing game that is so popular with travelers.

Put bridge tables together to form a long supper table. Use a gay red and green patterned paper cloth, or an unbleached muslin cloth decorated with green leaves. Brightly colored bowls of fresh fruit add a gay note.

When your guests have arrived, give each a kerchief tied to the end of a stick, with a paper leaflet inside. Some leaflets are titled "Galley Duties." These contain such instructions as "You and some other travelers will serve the first course."

Some voyagers will be assigned to second course, and so on. If you've asked a large crowd, have two couples serve each course.

Other leaflets inside the kerchief may be titled "Your Stunt." If this is the case, the guest does the stunt described inside, such as tell a whopper, make a short speech on how to dodge work, ask directions in sign language, or something equally amusing.

"Going Through Customs" is an hilarious game. A player secretly picks up an article to smuggle and hides it on himself. The others may each ask him one question about the object. If Customs Officers can't guess what it is, player goes to another room and hides something else. Person guessing the object is the next smuggler.

"All Aboard" is another game for an ice-breaker. Players form two lines—girls race against men—and it's nip and tuck to see which side wins! Assemble two piles of old clothes—men's and girls'. The leaders are given suitcases.

At the words "All Aboard!", they start to pack—girls from men's clothes; men from girls' clothes. They wear everything that the bags won't hold. And each races to the other side of the room and back, removes old clothes and unpacks the bag. Then the next in line starts.

To help your "stewards" who are serving the Cruise Supper, stack all dishes and silverware in plain sight and plan a menu that's easy to serve. We suggest

First course
Fruit cocktail
Second course
Scalloped shrimp and rice rolls
Third Course
Endive salad with French dressing
Fourth Course
Ice-Cream Pound Cake Coffee

Bon Voyage!

You're Having Dates Again!

Lovely to look at—delightful to know! The manpower shortage has eased up—you're having dates again. Most of our boys are back home—and they're keeping you busy.

But they'll never get a busy signal on your telephone if you don't act as pretty as you look. It's the little things that make or mar your charm; bad manners can make the prettiest girl an ugly duckling.

When you embark on an evening of dining and dancing, be enthusiastic. Join in the fun. Your beau is paying for your entertainment and the least you can do is show your appreciation. Don't eye that handsome chap at the next table. Concentrate on the

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man that brought you.

That chap takes pride in his personal appearance. He feels like an individual now that he's in civvies again. Don't be thoughtless and stuff his pockets with your paraphernalia; he doesn't want a silhouette that bulges in the wrong places, either.

Constant repair work on your face can spoil his evening, too. Apply your makeup at home, starting with a good foundation base. This should last through the evening. Perhaps just a quick finishing touch in the powder room when you check your coat and a quick bit of lip makeup after dinner will be all that is necessary.

If he should send or bring you flowers, wear them even if they do clash with your dress. Pin them in your hair—or on your coat—or on your bag. If you're going to a movie, the theatre or a concert, don't hang on his arm while he's getting the tickets. Step aside until he has them. Follow the usher and your date follows you. If there is no usher, let your beau go down the aisle first and you follow him.

And do be careful of your eating manners. A careless way of gulping your soup—talking with your mouth full of food—shoveling food onto your fork with a piece of bread, elbows on the table—can all mark you as an unattractive person.

Your Garden

Longer and warmer days—the penetrating rays of the Spring sunshine—may find you already planning this year's garden. Remember when they were called Victory gardens? If you didn't learn how to be glamorous

though grubbing around in your backyard, here are some tips for you now.

When you're out in the sun for long hours, wear a sunburn preventative. Use lipstick or pomade to keep your lips from parching and peeling. And don't forget cooling witch hazel to pat on little insect bites.

Your hair will need protection, too, if you want to avoid a streaked, bleached and dried-out look. Hard work in warm weather makes your scalp perspire. So you'll need and feel better for frequent shampoos. A brimmed hat or scarf is good as a headdress.

Adopt a gay, cool hair style—such as the topknot. Simply gather your hair at the top of your head and tie it there with a bit of bright ribbon. Curled ends will give you a topknot of ringlets to make you all the more charming a gardener.

You needn't sacrifice your glamour to work out of doors. With just a bit of well-aimed grooming you can look lovely in overalls!

Refrigerator Efficiency

Efficiency in your refrigerator is as important as a good filing system in a business office. There are certain places for certain foods. You shouldn't just put them in any old way after you've bought them.

Certain foods, such as milk, cream, butter, milk, fish and meats should have the coldest place in the box. Place them as near the freezing unit as possible. Leftovers and cooked dishes can be set on the center shelves. Fresh fruits and vegetables can go near the bottom of the refrigerator.

You know, of course, that some foods should never go into the refrigerator. These include bananas, jellies, preserves, honey, dry cereals and peanut butter. And don't overload the shelves. There should be space for the cold air to circulate so that all the foods in the box are chilled.

No refrigerator is effective if it has an odor of stale food and accumulated dirt in it. Wash the interior regularly; defrost as directed; wash the shelves. Air the interior and keep it spotless by wiping up any spilled food at once. Keep foods covered at all times.

Nail Polish Notes

How do you like these bright touches for a more colorful warm weather season? The effects are achieved with the lovely new nail polish shades that are now on sale all over town. By all means, keep your fingernails and toenails matching; but don't stop there.

Paint the rims of your sunglasses the same color. Or paint the rims with green, white or black polish to match your bathing suit. The nail polish on the rims will stay on as long as you want it to—or you can easily remove it with nail polish remover.

Another idea for color matching is to paint the heels of your sport shoes with a color to match your toes. Open-toe shoes will allow your toes to peep through and pick up the color accent of the painted heels.

By this time, all of you have found and used the new fast-drying oils that dry freshly lacquered nails almost immediately. No longer do you have to wait half an hour for nail polish to dry. Whisk some of this oil

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over your coat of polish—and in about two minutes your nails are thoroughly dried!

Fruit Punch

Ruth Anderson gave a bang-up party for a returned war hero last week. You know her as the author of bang-up stories in your favorite magazine.

She served a most luscious fruit punch. I know you'd like the recipe for the next time you entertain a crowd. Here's how:

1½ cups sugar or honey
2 cups tea
1 cup lemon juice
4 cups orange juice
1 cup lime juice
2 quarts crushed ice
orange, lemon and lime slices

Make the tea by pouring a little more than two cups of boiling water over eight teaspoons of tea. Let this steep five minutes or till strong and fragrant. Strain it and dissolve the sugar or honey in it while it is still hot. Mix well. Then mix with the fruit juice, combine with the ice, or one quart of iced carbonated water and one quart ice cubes. Add the sliced fruit. Serve as soon as chilled. This makes one gallon.

Another grand, cool drink—but not for large crowds—is this one—Mocha Milk Shake. Use half freshly made coffee and half freshly made cocoa. Add sugar, cream or top milk, or ice cream, and ice cubes to the shaker. Shake until frothy. Pour into tall, iced glasses.

Leg Loveliness

If the summer fashions that have been showing themselves in the shop windows have caught your eye, you have noticed that bare legs will be much in evidence. Play and tennis shorts are very brief—beach coats are short—and even with knee-length dresses on city streets, stockingless legs will come and go by regularly.

With so much of them showing, your legs will need extra grooming. Lovely legs start with cleanliness. Lots of soap, a tub of warm water, a rough washcloth or a little brush, used simultaneously, do a wonderful job of getting ankles, feet, heels and soles pink and healthy.

Use a rough towel for drying and be sure to dry thoroughly, especially between the toes. Any dampness left on your feet not only makes walking uncomfortable but may encourage those infections which can be an awful nuisance.

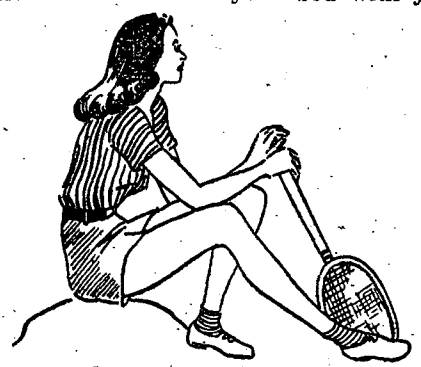
Now you're ready to remove the hair from your legs. Razor, wax or cream depilatory—the choice is yours. Suit yourself—so long as you get rid of the wool. Then come your toenails. Push back—never cut—the cuticle. File the nails, not to a point or an oval shape, but straight across. And apply polish to match fingernails and lips.

Your next step is your leg makeup. Here, too, there's a wide choice of liquid, dry or cream types. We like the cream type best—it comes in a convenient, economical tube. You wet the legs thoroughly, then apply the film with long even strokes, beginning at the instep and working upwards.

If you prefer a shiny, natural looking surface, polish your legs with a soft towel after the makeup is absolutely dry. It is water resistant and should not streak, run or rub off.

Unshapely legs are a cross to bear—but they can be improved. It's not a quick and easy process—but it can be done by stimulating the circulation through massage and exercise.

After much standing or walking, rest your legs on something high to change the flow of blood. Lie back on your bed with your



feet propped up on a pile of pillows, or lie on the floor with pillows under them.

Leg massage is part of leg reduction. Sit on the floor; rub a good lubricating cream over your legs and then with your hands use a wringing motion to massage them. In this motion the hands work on the legs the way they would if you were wringing out a towel. Start at the ankle and work all the way up.

If your calves or thighs are too heavy for shapely legs, do a slapping exercise to break down the tissues. Sit on the floor, bend your knees; then slide your foot in front of you and bang the leg hard on the floor—first the right leg and then the left.

A good exercise for the thighs, if they need extra attention, is to stand against a wall and bump that part of you hard against it.

We warn you, though, it's something you must keep at for a long, long time. It will have its reward—soon, but not too soon, you'll walk on legs you'll be proud to own.

Chit Chat From Here and There

It usually works the other way 'round—these glamour girls start in the theatre and then go on to Hollywood. Betty Field didn't do it that way. She has returned from Hollywood to thrill theatre audiences in a show that her husband wrote and directed. She's a dream in "Dream Girl." Elmer Rice, the

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author of the play, and Betty's husband, wrote it as a vehicle for Katharine Hepburn. She couldn't do it—but the girl for it was right at his elbow. And she has the critics and audiences at her feet.

Not swingy—not romantic—it has something that goes deeper than that. I'm talking about The Voice's recording of "The House I Live In." You Sinatra fans will want it for your collections. Non-Frank fans "are there such people?" will want to hear it because it's a grand song for Americans—real Americans.

People are always making surveys—and a good thing, too—or how would we know about what men like and don't like? The latest one shows that men do like sweaters—for daytime—especially for campus wear. But come nightfall and they want their gals to be sirens—wearing black, low-necked and streamlined.

Have you run across those lipstick tissues packed between covers resembling match books? They're slightly larger and just wonderful to keep in your purse. No more fishing around for a tissue to remove a lipstick smudge. No more lipstick imprints on teacups or napkins. When you re-do your lips, whip out one of the tiny squares and remove your superfluous lip makeup.

Black Cottons

Remember how popular those black cottons were last summer for sophisticated city wear? They're back again this season—very smart and chic—and how they emphasize the assorted honey and cafe-au-lait tones of sun-kissed skins.

Just because they're black, don't think you can skimp on laundering. Black shows spots, dust and powder and can look awfully shoddy. They need as frequent washing as white and pastel frocks. Wash in lukewarm water for both suds and rinsing, and dry in the shade.

To avoid streaks after ironing, be careful that the starch is well mixed and not too thick. Be sure to iron on the wrong side to prevent shine. Add a little bluing or strong tea to the starch when washing dark cottons. That faint dye odor noticeable in many of the new black cottons should disappear with washing.

Take good care of your swim suits, too. They should be swished through soap suds after each wear, rinsed and dried. You know, of course, that salt water or the chlorine used to disinfect pools will weaken the strength of a bathing suit and affect its color.

Another good warm weather laundering tip concerns girdles. They need more frequent laundering at this time of year.

For speedy drying, roll the garment in a thick bath towel. Unroll it, lay it on another dry towel and stuff it with crumpled tissue paper. This raises the top half of the girdle and lets the air circulate freely through it.

The Eyes Have It

When it comes to helping you give out with the glamour, the eyes have it. So give them a generous share of your attention. About their physical care—don't strain them. You can train them to relax. Don't concentrate too long at a time on sewing, reading, writing or other work. Look away occasionally from whatever you are doing and close and open your eyes a few times.

A bath for the eyes is as beneficial to them as the cold dash of water you give your skin. There are commercial eye washes—or you can easily make your own. A refreshing combination is a mixture of boric acid solution and camphor water—half and half.

The eyebrows and lashes should be brushed morning and night with an eyebrow brush. If they are sparse, use an eyebrow cream on both lashes and brows to encourage growth. If lashes are brushed upward, they will tend to curl. Straggly brows should be cleaned up with tweezers, but do not attempt to change and shape or give them too thin a line.

Be subtle about giving them allure. Eye makeup should never be artificial looking.

If your eyebrows are too light, eyebrow pencil applied to the hair only, not to the skin underneath, will help to call attention to the eyes. Fill in uneven spot in the brows with the pencil. Then the brows should be brushed to give a natural effect.

Eyeshadow applied to the outer half of the lids only and mascara applied to the outer half of the lashes tend to give a wide-set look to the eyes.

For eyes that are normally wide set, the shadow is best blended from the center of the eye to the bridge of the nose. Small eyes, without much depth, need the shadow spread evenly over the whole lid.

Keep your eyes clear, healthy and lovely!

NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

The glamorous, gay night club life of New York—with its swing musicians, playboys, society patrons and ambitious songsters—is the enchanting setting of next month's featured romantic novelet. It's called DAWN LOVER and the author is one of your favorites, Jerrold Beim.

DAWN LOVER is a fascinating tale of two sweethearts who can't have the usual type of evening date together—because each of

(Continued on page 85)

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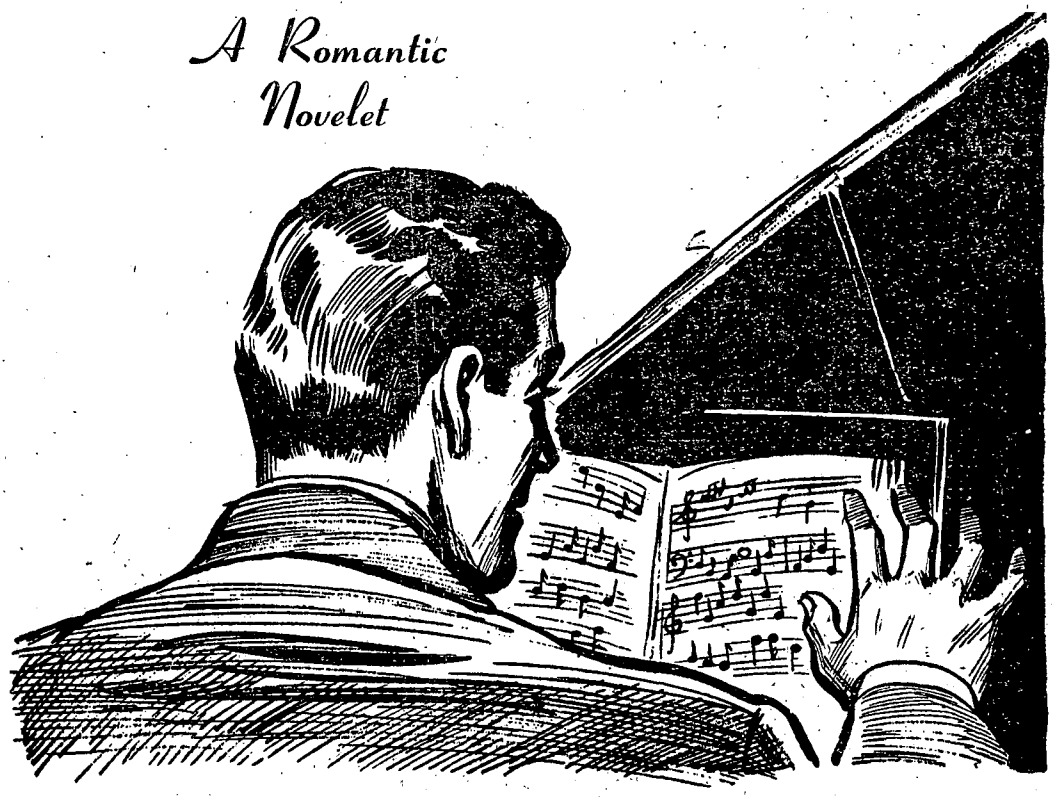
A Romantic Novelet

Trouble in Paradise

By NITA NOLAN

Pamela Selden, music publisher's daughter, finds life just full of discords—until the right man comes along and puts the proper lyrics to the melodies that stir in her heart!

CHAPTER I

Life Is No Song

THE big double doors of Selden and Selden Music Publishers opened to admit a tall, rusty-haired young man carrying a well-worn brief case. Pamela Selden got up from her desk and surveyed him from over the counter. Probably another musician wanting free copies, she thought, and pulled two of the latest tunes from the tidy stack under the counter.

He didn't make a grab for them as the others usually did. He just stood there, staring at her, golden lights dancing in his brown eyes and his wide mouth spread into the sort of a grin she couldn't ignore. Some of the other had whistled, or made little clucking noises, but this one just stared and stared. He never touched the music Pam laid out for him.

"Yipee!" he finally said, drawing the sound out. "And I thought my hair was red."

Pam's small chin came up. "What's the matter with it?" she asked indignantly.

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Dave grinned up at her, struck a chord and began to play

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That Titian tint had cost her two hours and five dollars this morning. Estelle, the beauty operator, had assured her it was becoming.

"What's wrong with my hair?" she demanded, drawing herself up to her full five feet-four inches.

"It's beautiful!" His eyes as he leaned over the counter took in the rest of her slim figure. He chuckled. "It sure is!" He gave her a gay salute. "I'm Dave Bowman."

He ignored the free copies and began opening his brief case, pulling out some music scores. He shoved them toward her.

"I think it's pretty good," he said. "Where's a piano?" He looked around the big office.

Pam thought: Oh-oh, lad with ambitions and he opens his doors with flattery! She said: "We're not having any today. My father and brother are out of town and I'm not interested."

"I can leave it," he told her. "I always have my stuff copyrighted first. Where's the piano?" He moved toward one of the small rehearsal rooms. "Just want you to hear it. It's good."

Pam moved from behind the counter, following him.

"Look," she said dryly. "Why don't you stop trying to convince yourself. Besides, we don't buy unsolicited material."

But her words were lost in a run of tinkling sounds up and down the piano keyboard.

"Good tone." He grinned up at her, struck a chord and began to play.

Over his shoulder Pam read the music and hummed as he went through the score.

"Like it?" he asked, and went right on playing, slower on the second chorus as Pam began to sing:

> You're causing havoc in my heart.
> And you knew it from the start.
> I lived a life of quiet, till you
> started all this riot.
> You set my blood on fire;
> There's no quenching my desire.
> You're lovable, you're huggable,
> You're all that I require.
> You're trouble in Paradise."

SHE made a wry face as she finished. It wouldn't do to encourage this smart boy.

"Wow, what corn," she said. "Strictly moon and June. Why don't you take a correspondence course?"

"Oh, I can fix the lyrics."

Dave swung around on the piano stool. He was looking at her with that something in his eyes again. Pam began to back out of the room. She didn't want to be within grabbing distance, and he looked capable.

"How about lunch with me?" Dave merely said. "You look awfully pretty in that blue dress. It matches your eyes." He rose, tucking his music in the brief-case. "Come on. I'll treat you to Sardi's."

Pam gave him a look that would have frozen a stone. He was just like the rest of them—ambitious writers and musicians trying to butter their way to fame through her father's publishing business by making love to her. She retreated behind the counter and faced him.

"I don't eat lunch and I have dinner engagements today, tomorrow and forever after, as far as you are concerned. If you care to revise your score bring it in when my father's here, next week."

She moved toward her desk, closing the interview.

He stood there for a moment just looking at her, then he sighed, and fastened the clasp on his brief case.

"Okay, Beautiful," he said. "Have it your way." He went out.

Pam stared at the closed doors which had held his tall figure a moment before. If only it could have been different. There was something about that Dave Bowman that caught and held her. Something about his smile and the way he tilted his head when he talked. She had a feeling that if he put his arms around her there would be gentleness as well as strength in his embrace.

Pam pushed her dark-bronze hair off her forehead in a gesture of defeat. It wasn't any use, she reflected. You met someone you liked immediately, but there was always that fear to spoil things. Selden and Selden Music Publishers, were famous for hit tunes, and that was all that seemed to interest anybody, as far as she was concerned. Even back in college, before she had come into the office, there had been Ned and Dick Burns, brothers who had written some pretty good numbers for the college play. She had taken Ned seriously, her father had published two of his songs, and that ended the romance.

But Pam hadn't stop shedding bitter tears for over a year. The lesson had been one she wouldn't soon forget. Dave might be different, but she couldn't afford to take that chance.

Pam got up from her desk, trying to shut

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the memory of Dave out of her mind. His music was good, but how could you encourage a man who kept looking at you with eyes that said: "Yummm!"

She moved over to the window and stood looking down at Broadway. Times Square, as usual, was a constant stream of people from all parts of the country. Visitors to New York on early spring vacations, and those who worked up and down the stem, ambitious kids and the older ones who carried on courageously through hungry days and sleepless nights while they haunted theatrical offices for jobs.

Dave was one of those, probably from somewhere in the Middle-west. He didn't talk like a New Yorker. You could always tell.

Pam sighed and went back to the letters on her desk, pushing a blank piece of paper into the typewriter. Why couldn't she have been an ordinary girl whom someone could love just for herself? She had a good voice, and twice she had threatened to quit the office and take a singing job, under a new name. There had been plenty of offers, good ones, but always the fear of strings being attached to each one—like the time the bandleader had written a song. No, working in New York was out of the question. She was too well-known.

At eleven forty-five the next morning Dave came in. He was wearing a dark suit, but the first thing that caught Pam's eye was his tie. It was the most violent shade of red this side of a forest fire, she decided.

She started to rise from her desk, then sat down abruptly, trying to still the pounding of her heart. Stop it, she scolded herself. This chap has only one idea in view—getting his music published. She drew a deep breath, pretending interest in the bills on her desk while she tried to steady the trembling of her hands. Finally, she looked up and gave him a cool smile.

"Professional copies?" she asked, as if he were just another musician. "We're out of orchestrations."

His dark eyes challenged her. "Remember me?" he said. "Trouble In Paradise, the song you suggested that I write new lyrics for."

"'Trouble In Paradise'—'Trouble In Paradise'?" She gave him a blank look, shaking her head. Then suddenly she smiled and said, "Oh, yes, that one."

She was having trouble keeping her voice steady because his eyes were saying "Yummmmm" again. Pam looked away.

"I'm afraid I can't help you," she said. "My father and brother are still in Boston."

DAVE was opening his brief-case.

"That's okay. I just want you to hear them once before I take you to lunch. You're wearing my favorite blue dress again. I know just the place to take you—a French restaurant where the booths are a deep maroon. Your dress against that color—" He paused, looking at her hair, then let out a yelp. "Oh, no! Not with that red hair!"

"My hair is not red!" Pam exploded. "But your tie is! Violently, disgustingly red! It's almost as flamboyant as your colossal nerve. Good day, Mr. Bowman." And she turned her back on him.

Dave chuckled. "She noticed my tie and remembered my name," he murmured. "That's a good sign. I like tempers that go with red hair." He went on as if talking to himself. "Let's see—boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy wins girl, period. So far, so good. All the rules in the book."

Pam heard him chuckling as he took his brief-case into the rehearsal room. In a moment he called:

"Okay, I'll be good. Come have a look at these lyrics."

He started playing and as she moved into the room and stood beside him.

"Pamela," he said. "I like that name. It's different." He looked up at her but she refused to meet his gaze. "Pam," he said quietly, "you have a good voice. You should be out on your own. There are a lot of mediocre singers with big name bands and they get by. But you're good!" He stopped playing and faced her. "Hey! Are you listening?"

Pam looked at him then. "Yes," she said quietly. "I heard you. But I'm not looking for a singing career. I hear enough bad singing and corny music in this place to last me a lifetime. I have no misplaced ambition."

That line generally shut people up. But Dave just grinned.

"Okay, we'll skip that," he said, "but I still think you're passing up a good bet in not having lunch with me. We could start that way—just lunches at first, then later dinners, and eventually we might even get around to the point of having breakfasts together. Legally, I mean. I'm not averse to marriage."

Pam's face flamed. She fumbled for the

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right retort, something sophisticated, but all she could say was:

"You—you are impossible! You're losing your mind!"

Dave's grin broadened as he watched her confusion, then abruptly he swung the piano stool and began playing again. He knew exactly when to stop pressing her, she thought, and turned her attention to the new lyrics spread across the piano.

She studied them a few minutes, humming the tune, then she shook her head.

"They're no improvement on the others. What did you do with the old lyrics?"

He fished in his brief-case and handed them to her.

"I couldn't seem to work up any enthusiasm with the new ones," he told her. "But you said these were corny. Anyway, I tried."

Pam sang one chorus, then stopped. "I haven't changed my opinion," she said dreamily. "Use your imagination. Trouble in paradise suggests the Garden of Eden, a boy and a girl in love." Her voice trailed off and there was just the music between them. "Use your imagination," she repeated faintly.

"I am!" Dave's voice shook her out of her reverie. He was looking at her with his heart in his eyes. He began singing:

You set my blood on fire;
There's no quenching my desire.
You're lovable, you're huggable,
You're all that I require.

He ended in a whisper:

You're my trouble in Paradise.

Pam tore her eyes from his and fled to the outside office. She didn't see the two musicians standing by the counter until she ran into them.

"I'm sorry," she stammered, handed them each a dozen free copies without the usual questions, and sat down at her desk. She could see them grinning at each other as they walked out.

It was perfectly ridiculous, but this obstreperous young man was getting under her skin. What was more, strangers were starting to notice it.

Yes, Pam had to do something violent—something to change the course of human events quickly. But what? She could not make up her mind, she was that far gone on the trail of love.

"Darn!" she said in anger.

Her impulse was to scatter things off her desk, to smash something.

CHAPTER II

Good-By to Love

DAVE was still playing the piano, not "Trouble In Paradise" but something soft, dreamy and old. Pam listened for a moment, then getting up, walked to the window.

Why didn't Dave go before he broke down all her good resolutions? She tried to steel herself against his music, fighting a strong impulse to go back into the rehearsal room and stand beside him, to touch him.

She didn't need to be in the same room to know how he looked. His dark eyes and the smile that played about his wide mouth were photographed so deeply in her heart she could never forget him.

She leaned her forehead against the cool glass of the window, wishing that he would stop playing. And then, suddenly, he was closing the piano. Pam went quickly back to the typewriter as he came in. She managed to give him a cool smile.

"Sorry about the lyrics," she told him. "Work out something newer and not quite so sticky." She watched his face sober as he put the music away and lit a cigarette. "Come in when my father's here," she added. "He may be able to help you."

Dave eyed her unsmilingly. "I'm not interested in your father, Pam. For the last time—will you have lunch with me?"

She tore her gaze from him, and under the counter her nails dug into the wood.

"The answer is—no!" she replied.

Pam was still standing there with downcast eyes when she heard the door close behind him. That, she thought, will be the last I'll ever see of Dave Bowman.

But she was wrong.

The next evening when she left the office she found him standing just outside her building. He didn't look her way, but gave a smiling nod to three men near the door. Immediately they moved to a position in front of Pam and as one produced a small accordion, they began to sing "Trouble In Paradise."

Pam's mouth dropped open and she could only stand and stare at the trio. Finally she shot Dave a withering glance and tried to push by. They blocked her path and all she

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could do was glare at Dave while he shook with laughter.

Finally, when the second chorus was almost over he gave her a mocking salute and strode off, losing himself in the Broadway crowd. Pam tried to run after him and, although the trio let her pass, the mob who had gathered to listen to the serenade made a new obstacle.

Pam eventually made the street but Dave had disappeared. She walked all the way home trying to cool her anger, and it wasn't until she got into bed that night that she began to see the funny side of the situation.

"I guess I looked pretty ridiculous," she mused, "standing there fuming while the trio played me a love song. I'll get even with that big lug"—she chuckled—"if it's the last thing I do."

Dave didn't come into the office the next day, but just as she had suspected, he was waiting outside in the same spot. She looked around for the trio, then darted toward Dave's tall figure. Whatever trick he had up his sleeve she wasn't going to be alone in it. But before she reached him, a uniformed messenger tapped her on the arm.

"Miss Selden?" he inquired. "Miss Pamela Selden?"

Pam nodded. She had been expecting a wire from her father all day. The messenger crooked a forefinger and two men set a huge basket of snowy gladiolas down in front of Pam. The basket, alone, reached her shoulder.

"Flowers for you, Miss Selden," the boy said.

"How perfectly beautiful!" Pam exclaimed. "You can carry them—"

She was tearing the small card out of the envelope. She looked up to find that the messenger and his helpers had disappeared. And Dave was gone also. Pam read the card:

> Hope you find this basket a bigger burden than "Trouble In Paradise."
>
> Dave

She drew a deep breath and began tapping her foot. Once more Dave had outsmarted her. Dave knew that taxis were scarce on Broadway, especially at dinner time. He also knew it would be impossible to find anyone to carry the basket. And yet, she just couldn't go away and leave it—a standing momento of "Trouble In Paradise!"

Pam was still standing there, almost in tears, when a policeman came up.

"Sorry, miss," he said, not unkindly, "but you'll have to get that thing out of here. Blocking the entrance is against the law And this ain't Radio City Plaza."

"I'd gladly move it," she said furiously, "if you can get me a derrick."

He eyed the flowers and his cap slid back as he scratched his head.

"'Tis a problem you got, miss," he admitted and Pam saw his eyes twinkle.

For a moment she hadn't been sure, but now she knew Dave had sent this officer just to frighten her. She touched his arm and looked up into his face imploringly.

"What's a girl to do?" she asked. "If your best girl was on the receiving end of your flowers, wouldn't you help carry them?"

His round face spread in a grin.

"B'goorry an' that I would!" he exclaimed.

HE WRAPPED his long arms around the basket and carried it easily out to the curb, then hailed a taxi and got both Pam and the flowers into it, telling the driver to be sure the flowers were taken inside her house. As Pam thanked him, he stuck his head in the window and gave her a broad wink.

"Don't be givin' me away to the laddie," he said.

Pam smiled at him. "That I won't," she said. "That I won't."

But to herself she thought, "That's three strikes against you, Mr. Bowman. Just wait."

She was totally unprepared for Dave when he bounced into the office the next afternoon.

"Hi," he greeted her and spread a sheaf of music across the counter. "Look, teacher, new numbers. Brand new numbers!"

"We are not interested," she retorted coldly. "Take your silly scores and let that trio play them up at the Bronx Zoo. You'll find a better audience. And as for those flowers, there are more profitable ways to spend your money. If your music is any good at all you can sell it without trying to butter your way."

Pam stopped, horrified at what she had said. She watched Dave slowly gather up his music. His face was white, and there were tense lines about his usually smiling mouth.

She stared at him for a moment, her whole body trembling. Then she turned and ran into her father's private office. Neither

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Dave nor anyone else would dare follow her there. But Pam reckoned wrong. She heard Dave stalk across the outside office and open the door. He stood silently regarding her with scorn in his eyes.

"That was pretty childish," he said. "Out our way, in Chicago, we give every fellow his chance, big or small-towner. We also call it the theatre, even though it isn't New York. And as for the girls—maybe some of them aren't quite as pretty, but they all have better manners. Good-bye, Pamela Selden." And he closed the door.

Pam listened to his departing footsteps. There was a sound of firm finality to them. She sank into her father's chair and put her head down on the desk. Then Pam began to cry harder than she had ever cried in her life.

Dave had walked out, just as she had goaded him into doing. What was wrong with her? Why couldn't she have been honest, at least, with herself? Dave should have had an even chance to prove himself, but instead she had let all her bitterness and fear rule her heart and mind.

Now he was gone and she realized her mistake. It was doubtful if she would ever learn to forget him. Dave wouldn't come back to give her another chance to hurt him.

A week later Pam was more sure of it than ever. She tried to find him, even going so far as to ask every musician and composer who dropped in if they knew David Bowman, or where he lived. They not only didn't know, but had never heard of him, they told her.

Pam's father and brother came back from Boston with the complete score of a new musical and the publishing house began to teem with activity. Everyone was happily busy but Pam. She plowed through the endless days more discontented and unhappy than ever. Bandleaders, musicians and writers continued to ply her with invitations. Finally, in desperation, Pam began going out.

Suddenly she found herself in a maelstrom of parties and night-clubbing. She bought new gowns for every occasion and had her hair done a dozen different ways, always with the thought in mind that somewhere, somehow she would run into Dave. But he had completely disappeared.

Exactly one month to the day that Dave had walked out of her father's office, Pam sat down and took stock of herself. It was late afternoon and her father had suggested that she go home. "Because if you don't get some rest you won't be fit to photograph," he had told her.

Pam knew what he meant. Word had got around that Pamela Seldon was on a merry-go-round. The theatrical columnists and photographers had picked it up, hungrily, and only this morning one of the tabloids had printed a picture of her sitting with Ted Tyson at the Stork Club.

Actually, she had been escorted by her brother, but Bud wasn't shown in the picture. Ted's reputation was not too good, and although Pam's father hadn't reproached her, she knew he was upset.

As she was leaving the office, Pam made up her mind to cancel all engagements for the next few days. She was pulling on her gloves by the elevator when a tall, blond girl and two musicians, carrying their instruments came out of another office.

"See, I told you," Pam heard the girl say. "Chicago's wide open for talent. They're screaming for singers. That's the fourth tip I've had, and I've already written for two of the jobs."

"Baby, when they book you, they must be hard up," one of the men snorted. "When Al said you were sharp he didn't mean you had a neat chassis. You'd better stick to blues and talk your jive. You couldn't sing on key if they handed you one out of a door."

"Aw, stop needling June," the other man said.

The elevator arrived at that moment and conversation ceased as they all got in.

PAM didn't go straight home when she left the building. She kept thinking about that blond singer they had called June. The girl had courage to leave New York on written promises of a job.

It was a warm, spring day and Pam found herself walking up Broadway to the park. She bought some peanuts and, sitting down on a bench, fed the pigeons.

They flocked around her until the bag was empty.

Pam sat very still watching them move on to a new friend. Pigeons, she reflected, are like people. All this giddy running around in circles hadn't changed the pattern of her life. It was still empty of love. If anything, it had made her more conscious of being her father's daughter, a drawing card to false popularity.

Actually, she had nothing of her own. She envied June, the blond night-club singer, go-

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ing to Chicago where she would find plenty of work.

"You have a good voice," Dave had said. "You should be out on your own."

Pam's chin came up suddenly, and her eyes became bright. Why not? Why shouldn't she go out on her own, she thought. And Chicago was as good a place to start as any. By changing her name, make-up and hair, no one would recognize her.

Pam began to plan. Aunt Stella lived in Chicago and would keep her secret. Actually she wouldn't stay with her aunt—just use the address for mail from her father. She would find a small hotel downtown somewhere in the Loop.

Pam's footsteps were light as she walked homeward, and for the first time in weeks she ate a hearty dinner. Afterward she spent a half hour on the telephone canceling all engagements, with the excuse that she was going to the seashore for a vacation. Her father was delighted with the idea of a visit to Aunt Stella and he promised not to reveal the fact that she would be in Chicago instead of Atlantic City.

The next two days were spent in a frenzy of shopping, and life had taken on a new zest for Pam by the time she was on the train headed west. She began to feel as if she were an individual instead of being a part of a music corporation.

Only one small item worried her: The initials on her bag and luggage were plainly marked "P.T.S." Whatever name she took would have to have the same initials. Pam took out a pencil and began to figure—Paula, Pauline, Prudence, Pansy. She shook her head, none of them seemed to fit her personality.

The train lurched and Pam's purse slid off her lap. Some coins rolled down the aisle and she stared at them. Penny! That was it, Penny—Stevens. Now there was a name an agent couldn't easily forget.

As the easy rolling of the train rocked her to sleep that night, Pam smiled happily to herself. Chicago was closer and closer with every turn of the wheels. Maybe she would never see Dave again, but somehow she had a strong feeling of his nearness.

Pam left her bags at the station while she hunted a small, clean hotel in the Loop. Practically every place was filled to capacity, but she finally managed a two-by-four with an adjoining bath that she shared with the girl next door. She got a taxi and brought her bags from the station, then called her aunt.

Aunt Stella listened quietly while Pam explained her plans.

"A chip off the old blockhead!" Her aunt's laugh boomed over the wire. "Your father left Chicago the same way. He wanted to write music and become famous. He got ahead all right, but somebody else had to write the tunes. You'll do better." Then her voice softened. "Of course I'd rather have you here, but I'll forgive you just as long as you come to dinner as often as you can. I'll keep your secret. Good luck, child."

Pam hung up after promising to come to dinner soon. She wanted this first night alone, to unpack, make a list of the agents she would visit and to make a small tour of the Loop.

CHAPTER III

On Her Own

PAMELA slept little that night. The bed was strange and the street noises seemed to be coming right from inside the room.

She had left a call for eight o'clock and when the phone rang Pam answered it and wearily pulled herself to a sitting position on the edge of the bed. No use to hurry. She could hear the girl next door splashing around in the bath.

Finally a door closed and there was silence. Pam got her soap and towel and took a hot and icy-cold shower to awaken her. A half-hour later, with her hair combed into a soft, shining roll that barely swept the shoulders of her light-gold wool suit, she surveyed herself in the mirror as she fastened on the tiny pill-box of a hat.

"So long, Pam." She waved a gay salute to the slim, long-legged girl who smiled back at her. "Penny Stevens will take over from here on out."

She picked up the overnight case which held two of her newest gowns, slippers, make-up and music. Her first stop would be a well-known theatrical photographer. Good pictures were important and this particular one made them in twenty-four hours.

Pam spent the morning having dozens of poses made. The man promised to have them at her hotel by noon of the next day. After

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leaving her overnight bag at the hotel, she lunched in a nearby cafeteria. The food was exceptionally good and Pam found she was hungry.

It was one o'clock by the time Pam finished lunch, went back to the hotel for her music, and started on the rounds of the agents.

The first on her list was a large plushy office with high-ceilinged rooms and white walls covered with chrome-framed photographs of male and female performers. The blond-pompadoured receptionist who sat at her switchboard behind the glassed-in enclosure, gave Pam a frosty look, took her name and address and inquired about her previous singing experience.

She wrote everything down, then motioned Pam into a chair while she spoke on the phone. It seemed hours that Pam sat there, gripping her zipper case, before the girl called to her.

"Come back tomorrow, four o'clock, with your music," the girl said briskly. "Mr. Dale will arrange for an audition."

Pam thanked her and went out to the elevator. The next two agents were in the same building on the second and fourth floor. Their offices were smaller, but run on the same basis. She was told to come back when she had photographs.

The fourth agent was out of town and wouldn't be back for a week, so she went on to the fifth. It was a small, shabby cubicle with a smaller rehearsal room adjoining it. The agent who greeted Pam drank the remainder of his coffee from the container and balled the wax paper around the remnants of a rye bread and bologna sandwich. His red-rimmed little eyes surveyed her before he spoke.

"Penny Stevens?" he said and shook his bald head. "Never heard of you. Worked around Chicago much?" When Pam shook her head he said, "I see you got your music." He twisted around in his chair calling, "Jack, dust the piano off and let's see if this baby can fit into Chez Martains. They gotta have a girl by tonight."

A wizened little man stuck his head out from the rehearsal room and regarded her owlishly through horn-rimmed glasses.

"Could be," he said in a deep bass voice. "Could be."

He motioned her in and spread her music across the ancient upright piano. Pam clenched her gloved hands to steady her nerves, cleared her throat, and began to sing. When she had gone through three numbers, he got abruptly to his feet, handed back the music and lounged against the door, nodding to the fat little man behind the desk.

"She'll do," he said shortly. "She'll do."

The fat man grinned at Pam.

"Baby," he said, "you got what it takes—looks, voice and a figure that will knock their eyes out." He opened the desk drawer and pulled out some contracts. "How's your Twenty-one game?" he asked.

"Twenty-one game?" Pam stared at him. "What's that?"

The fat man's jaw dropped. And the piano player came over to peer at her through his spectacles.

"Where you been?" the fat man said incredulously. "A smart girl like you don't know the Twenty-one table?" He shook his head until the fat jowls swung like open gates in a high wind. "If you been around," he said, "you oughta know a singer in these small clubs have to double on the gambling tables if they wanta work steady."

Pam zipped her music case shut with a loud snap. She eyed the two men coldly.

"Sorry," she said, "but I'm a singer, not a gambling table hostess." And she walked out of the office.

Behind her she heard the fat man complaining:

"Too bad. That girl was a natural."

"She'll be back," the pianist replied. "She'll be back."

IT WAS almost five o'clock, and Pam felt weary and discouraged. She wondered if all the agents required singers to double on the gambling tables. She sighed, and looked at the rest of her list. There was only two more in this neighborhood and she might just as well try them today.

Paragon, Incorporated was in the tall, modern office building directly across the street. Pam crossed over and went in. She stood in front of the big, clean, frosted double doors indecisively for a moment. Should she wait and come back tomorrow when her hair and make-up were freshly done?

A big man pushed by her and before Pam knew it she was inside the office and standing in front of the reception desk. She looked around while the girl talked to the man ahead of her. The room was large and cheerful, with indirect lighting bringing out the rosy hue of the walls. Huge bowls of

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flowers stood on end tables by each chintz-covered easy-chair, and the floor was carpeted in pale blue. It was the most comfortable office she had seen in Chicago.

The man moved on into one of the offices and the dark-haired receptionist gave Pam a friendly smile. Then her nose wrinkled up and she sneezed. Pam said,

"God bless you."

"Thank you," the girl said. "It's rose fever."

She motioned to the flowers and blew her nose into a wispy handkerchief.

"I want a job," Pam said, and grinned as she put her music case down and leaned on the desk. "I'm a singer, but I wouldn't know a Twenty-one table from a Badminton court. I can sing anything from arias to boogie and I've brought my music for an audition. Tomorrow I'll bring photographs." She ended up breathlessly.

The girl smiled, but shook her head. "It's too late for an audition today. Our pianist has left." A door behind Pam opened. The receptionist looked beyond her, paused, and then as the door closed she picked up the phone and pushed a buzzer. She spoke briefly.

"Yes? Very well. Yes, sir."

She hung up, and smiled at Pam.

"Will you come in tomorrow morning at ten? Our pianist will be here to give you an audition."

Pam nodded and gave the girl her new name, address, and the type of number that she sung best. She left the office feeling that she had finally accomplished something.

The pianist who played for Pam's audition the next morning was friendly like the receptionist. As he played the piano, his blond head nodded in time to the music. He seemed to enjoy every note, and it brought out the best in Pam's voice.

They went over each number twice before he folded her music and turned to the dapper little agent who had sat quietly listening.

Mr. Rogers eyed her somberly.

"Now I know what a poker-face looks like," Pam thought. "I hope it isn't bad news."

He got out of his chair. "Penny Stevens," he said thoughtfully. "Well, Miss Stevens, you can certainly sing, but your experience is limited. We can book you into the Uptown Playhouse for tomorrow night, but you understand it's merely a try-out."

Pam nodded and he went on:

"Get the address from Miss Brent on your way out. You'll be singing with a band."

Pam thanked him and went happily out to the reception desk. The girl gave her full instructions and wished her luck. Pam left the office on winged feet. She was getting her chance and without the aid of her father's name. If only Dave was here to see her now!

The next morning she arrived at the theatre before eleven o'clock for music rehearsal. She'd had some trouble finding the place because it was a small, obscure picture house just off Halstead on Chicago's South Side.

Pam paused in front of the big sign reading: "Vaudeville Today." There were some photographs; an acrobatic dancer, small, dark and pretty in her satin trunks and bra; a white-haired magician in evening clothes complete with silk hat and cape, and a man and woman juggling Indian clubs. Lastly, there was a large picture of a white-coated band: Bart Barton and his Boys.

Pam bent closer, but there wasn't a familiar face in the lot. She breathed a relieved sigh and moved on to the door marked "Stage Entrance," following a dark-haired girl who resembled the dancer named Sandra Shane into the dressing room.

Sandra Shane set her overnight bag on a chair and began unpacking the rose satin acrobatic costume. It seemed to be the only one she had. Pam watched her carefully lay out her make-up on the mirrored shelf next to her own. She eyed Pam briefly as she spoke.

"Suppose you're Penny Stevens," and without waiting for Pam to answer she went on, "These flea-bite movie houses kill me. Ever work with Bart and his boys before?" Pam shook her head and Sandra said, "They're breaking in too. If you get a good response from this audience, you'll go over anywhere. But if you don't—" she drew a slim forefinger across her throat and made a slicing noise—"curtains."

"I guess I'm pretty green about playing in movie houses," Pam speculated.

SHE was thinking of the many times she had sung for benefits in New York—smart night-clubs and theatres, entertaining polite, casual audiences in expensive evening clothes.

"This place should be a pretty good test for anybody," she said.

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Sandra laughed. "Honey, it's more than that! Getting applause out of these hoodlums is like trying to make a dent in a brick wall. You have to practically wear 'em down."

"Come on," she said. "I hear Bart and the boys tuning up. Bart doesn't like being kept waiting for music rehearsal. Besides, the picture is due to go on any minute."

Pam picked up her music and followed Sandra down a steep flight of iron steps into the damp-smelling basement just under the stage.

Bart Barton and the boys looked like any high school band. They all wore crew hair cuts and large, green-monogramed white sweaters and they all had that eager look about their clean-shaven faces. Bart Barton wore the only mustache in the outfit and in spite of the sweater and gray slacks he gave the appearance of being dapper.

"Hi, Nuisance!" he greeted Sandra, but he eyed Pam speculatively. "Penny Stevens," he said. "Meet the wolves."

He waved toward the group of musicians seated on wooden boxes.

A chorus of "Awoooos!" rose by way of greeting, and Bart laughed.

"They mean it," he said. He glanced at her music. "Top tunes, eh? Most of these lads never saw 'em before—too new. But I guess they can follow you."

He looked her up and down for a moment, then made a clucking noise.

"Not bad. Not bad," he said. "But you'll have to give the mugs in this audience more than just voice. How's your motor roll?" He made a movement with his hips. The boys let out a howl and Pam laughed. He picked up his baton, rapped it sharply on a box. "Okay," he said. "Stop drooling. She's already spoken for. Let's get going."

He handed out the orchestrations, picked up his trombone and the band began to play Pam's opening introduction. She realized they were good. It was new music but they read it on sight.

As she began to sing, she thought, "Dave would like this number. It's slow and sentimental, on the order of 'Trouble In Paradise.' Now there was a song! Actually, it had everything."

"Okay, children. That's all for Miss Stevens."

Bart's voice brought Pam back from her reverie. With a start she realized they had gone through all her numbers. She saw the bandleader eyeing her strangely.

"Tempo all right," he asked, and she nodded.

He was still looking at her as he motioned Sandra to start her first dance. As Pam started up the stairs she heard him say, "Hope you can take it, Penny Stevens."

She paused, glancing back at him. His attention was on leading his band.

CHAPTER IV

Love Song

WHEN Sandra came up, she and Penny went out for coffee and a sandwich while the first picture was being shown. They got back to the theatre with a good three-quarters of an hour to spare before the vaudeville began. Pam put her make-up on carefully, combed her hair that looked almost black without the Titian rinse, and slipped on her gown. Sandra eyed the pale-yellow chiffon gown as she zipped Pam up the back.

"You are certainly a glutton for punishment," she said. "The one color we don't wear in the theatre is yellow! I'll admit it's a snazzy gown, but why leave yourself wide open?"

Pam shrugged. "Theatrical superstitions never have bothered me. I like yellow."

"Okay," Sandra sighed. "It's your funeral." She tilted her head, listening. "There goes the band. Curtains up."

She took one last look at herself in the mirror, then smiled at Pam.

"Don't forget you go on after the jugglers. Good luck, honey." She flew out of the room.

Pam closed the door and sat down, staring at herself in the mirror. Her face was white under the make-up and her hands felt cold and moist. She was getting the well-known jitters.

Listening tensely for the sound of applause that would surely follow Sandra's dance, she thought, "This is like waiting for a volley of shots from a firing squad. Poor Sandra!" Pam closed her eyes and dug her nails into the edge of the chair seat.

Then suddenly it came—screams and whistles and waves of clapping. Pam ran to the door and flung it open. Sandra had gone over big!

Finally after three encores she came

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through the wings, flushed, bright-eyed and dripping with perspiration.

"I made it!" she gasped happily. "They liked me!" She flung herself into a chair. "You'd better stand by," she said. "The magician goes on next and time's short. Good luck again, baby."

Pam smiled nervously and went on out. She stood in the wings twisting her evening handkerchief. The magician was getting catcalls from the audience.

"Grandpa, show us a new one! Aw, take him off, somebody! Bring on the girls! Bring on the dames!"

Pam could have cried for the man. His face was livid and his hands shook as he fumbled and dropped trick after trick. Cards fluttered to the floor and rings rolled all over the stage. The band began to play louder in an effort to drown out the noise which had become a sing-song of stomping feet in time to, "We want gir-rls. We want gir-rls."

The white-haired man finally picked up his collapsible table and tricks, and with what dignity he could muster walked off the stage. The elderly juggler and his partner made their entrance from the other side. They were frightened and nervous before they started. And the audeince never paused in it's sing-song until they left the stage.

By that time Pam's legs would scarcely hold her up, but nevertheless when Bart Barton signaled her, she went quickly out to the microphone.

"Get it over with," she steeled herself. "Get it over with!"

They gave a whoop and began to whistle as the band played the first chords of her opening song.

"Bring on the rest of 'em!" a voice from the balcony yelled.

"Shut up you!" another voice shouted.

That started a fight. Pam tried to sing above the commotion, but it was useless. The audience was more interested in a good fight than anything that could go on up on the stage. The manager finally brought the curtain down and cleared the theatre until the picture could go on.

The next performance was even worse. The office had replaced the magician and jugglers with two comedians who threw water-filled paper bags at each other. Luckily Sandra had gone on first, but Pam found herself picking her way, daintily, between the puddles.

"Look—Liza crossing the ice!" someone in the balcony yelled, and the audience howled with laughter.

Pam thought she recognized the voice from the first show, but she couldn't be sure. The man made another remark that Pam couldn't quite hear, but the audience got it and the sing-song began all over again. There was no use trying to sing after that, so the band just played and played until the curtain came down.

How she managed to get through the third show, Pam never knew. By that time she was walking through a nightmare and nothing seemed quite real. At least they did allow her to get through her first two songs before things began to happen. Then that same voice called:

"Take it off! Take it off! Take it off!" Somebody else joined in, singing: "Queenie, queen of them all-l-l."

Pam turned from the mike and looked at Bart Barton. He lifted his hands in a defeated gesture.

"If that's what they want, give it to 'em," she said.

The bandleader looked horrified and Pam laughed.

"Don't worry," she said, "I'll just sing!"

She turned back to the microphone and began to sing with the audience. They loved it and when she had finished the second chorus, she gave them a farewell salute and walked directly to her dressing room, shutting the door firmly behind her.

THE manager knocked and said they were applauding like crazy, and for her to come back out.

"Too late," Pam answered. "I'm going home. They had their fun."

Sandra's make-up shelf was cleared and the costume gone off the rack, but Pam saw a note stuck in her mirror. It read:

Better luck next time, baby. Keep trying. And if I find that heckler I'll punch him in the nose.

Sandra

Pam read the note over twice, then began to remove her make-up. So Sandra had also noticed that one particular heckler who had started all the trouble, each show. Why? She wondered.

The next morning Pam didn't feel much like facing her agent, but it had to be gotten over with. There was the matter of her music and photographs to be collected.

The receptionist gave her a bright smile.

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"Good morning, Miss Stevens," she said. "Go right in. Mr. Rogers is expecting you."

Pam nodded dully and went into his office. He looked up, grinned and motioned her into a chair.

"Unfortunate about last night," he said. "Bad neighborhood. Don't worry about it."

Pam looked at him, perplexed. He didn't seem the least bit angry. He shuffled some papers on his desk.

"We've got a new club opening tonight," he said. "Bart and the boys will be there. Would you like to try it?"

"Why—yes," Pam said hesitantly. "If you think I'll do."

"It's sure fire!" He dismissed her doubts with a gesture. "No reason why you shouldn't go over. Different clientele entirely, and no Twenty-one tables. But once you get your audience, hold them." He rose, closing the interview. "The girl will give you the address and time. Good luck, Miss—Miss Stevens."

Pam left the office feeling slightly better, but she was still slightly bewildered by the fact that Mr. Rogers had given her another chance. She rang for the elevator, listening to the tinkling of a piano coming from the office she had just left. Something familiar about the melody, she thought. It's almost like . . .

She started to turn back but the elevator arrived and before she had fully made up her mind, the doors closed and she was whizzing downward. The melody still hummed through her mind. Variations had sounded exactly like "Trouble In Paradise." Pam dismissed the thought. Dave was probably still in New York and the tune hadn't been published.

That night Pam had no trouble finding the Club Dixon. Bart and the boys were just arriving when her taxi pulled up to the curb. Bart waited for her.

'Sorry about last night," he said. "You should have waited for me."

"You couldn't have consoled me, but thanks anyway." Pam gave him a grateful smile. "Mr. Rogers was very nice about it and he's giving me another chance."

Bart glanced at her sharply, but said nothing. He looked as if there was something on his mind, but he just walked on in silence. Pam left him at the bandstand and went to the back of the club in search of her dressing room.

A half-hour later someone knocked on her door and said it was time for her first appearance. Pam smoothed the full skirt of her white taffeta strapless gown and fastened a snowy gardenia in the shining waves of her hair. She had found the flower on her dressing room table with a small card enclosed which read:

Good luck, beautiful.

Probably from the band, she thought, as she went out. They were already playing her introduction as she stepped up on the bandstand and took the microphone between her hands. She looked around the room as she began to sing. A well-dressed crowd, but noisy, she reflected.

There was a scattering of applause after her first song, but for some reason or other the crowd was more interested in their drinking companions and talking than in listening to her. During her second number, couples got up and began to dance. Fear clutched at Pam's throat and her voice began losing volume. She had lost her audience before she had scarcely started. Bart walked over to her.

"Bring it up—bring it up!" he whispered. "They can't hear you."

She tried hard after that, but in her effort to be heard she began to forget her lyrics.

After the last song Pam fled to the sanctum of her dressing room, tears streaming down her face. Bart followed her in and shut the door. He patted her arm awkwardly.

'Forget it, kid. You've gotta get used to these places. Hearing a girl singer with a band is like listening to a juke box to these people. It's like hearing the bartender's cocktail shaker or a clock on the wall. Nobody's actually hears them until they stop." He smiled at her reflection in the mirror. "Powder your nose and I'll buy you a drink."

"I—do-n't wa-nt a dr-ink." Pam tried to control her sobbing.

"Okay," he said, "I'll send you in a lemonade, but stop crying!"

Pam nodded and he went out. A waiter brought the lemonade soon after and Pam drank the cool liquid gratefully as she changed to another gown of dull gold for her second appearance.

SHE received a small ripple of applause as she started her second show, but Pam didn't care any more. She adjusted the mike to a better position and began to sing with

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reckless abandon. Bart and the boys nodded in silent approval.

Pam didn't like what she was doing, but if this crowd was satisfied, she would give them what they wanted, for tonight only. Tomorrow she would tell Mr. Rogers to find someone else for the job. She was an entertainer, not background music for table chit-chat.

Pam found the office practically deserted the next morning. The receptionist wasn't at her desk and Mr. Rogers' office door stood open. She walked in and sat down to wait. Someone was playing the piano in the rehearsal room. Probably the blond boy who had played for her audition, Pam reflected. He was playing better than before, variations of something.

She sat erect with a start, staring at the connecting door between Mr. Rogers' office and the rehearsal room. The music he was playing was definitely "Trouble In Paradise." There was no mistaking it now.

Pam ran to the door and flung it open, gazing in disbelief at the rusty-haired man seated at the piano.

"Dave!" she cried. "Dave Bowman!"

He twisted around and regarded her with brooding eyes, but he didn't stop playing.

"Had enough?" he asked gently.

She shook her head, puzzled. "Enough what?" She moved over to the piano. And suddenly she understood. "So you were the heckler, and behind all this?" she said.

"Not the heckler, exactly." Then his eyes lost their brooding and he grinned. "Perhaps I'm indirectly responsible," he admitted. "That's why I asked. Have you had enough?"

Pam sputtered. "Why, you—you—" She was lost for words.

But he didn't seem to be paying any attention to what she was saying. He was looking at her hair under the black calot.

'What happened to the redhead?" He inquired mildly. "You can't get mad without red hair to match the temper." He stopped playing, spun the piano stool and rose, towering over her. "How does it feel," he asked quietly, "to be in a strange city without friends when you're trying hard to sell your talent?"

He paused, studying her face, then he said, "You probably know, now. But you don't know what it is to love someone until you can't sleep nights for thinking of them. Wanting them and yet knowing that all you'll ever have are a few brief memories and your dreams."

"Oh, Dave!" Pam whispered. "I do know—all that. But I thought—" Her eyes pleaded with him.

He nodded. "I know what you thought. You had an idea that every man you met would look for fame through you and your father. You didn't even give me a chance to prove myself. I sold 'Trouble In Paradise' an hour after I left you that first day. But I came back with new lyrics because I wanted to see you. I even advised you to get out on your own, hoping that I'd have a better chance.

"Pam,"—he lifted her chin with a forefinger, looking into her eyes—"I watched you at the theatre and the club. I'm so proud of you I could bust." He paused, then said, "Pam, when you came into the office that first day, I began hoping. . . . Can we start from scratch?"

She shook her head. "What, and lose all we already have? No, Dave, I don't want to forget my lesson or how very much I love—"

Pam got no further because Dave was kissing her and his arms *were* gentle and strong. She sighed happily, thinking, "You are my trouble in Paradise, praise be."

Backache, Leg Pains May Be Danger Sign
Of Tired Kidneys

If backache and leg pains are making you miserable, don't just complain and do nothing about them. Nature may be warning you that your kidneys need attention.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking excess acids and poisonous waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

If the 15 miles of kidney tubes and filters don't work well, poisonous waste matter stays in the blood. These poisons may start nagging backaches, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from the blood. Get Doan's Pills. *(Adv.)*

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"Please come down," Dan pleaded. "I've got to talk with you"

This is Tomorrow

By POLLY SWEET

Sally Drake tries to give her heart away, but true love brings it back — brighter and more glowing than ever!

IT WAS almost time for the afternoon train to arrive, and practically everyone in Centretown had turned out to meet it. Sally Drake stood back from the edge of the crowd, a half-expectant, half-wistful smile on her lips. She plunged her hands deeper into her sweater pockets and took a deep breath.

Dan Selby would be coming home on that train, with an honorable discharge from the Marines. He had been wounded on Iwo Jima after long months of fighting in the South Pacific. The Naval hospitals had done everything possible for him. He had written Sally that now he was practically as good as new.

But Sally was worried—not for herself,

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but for Dan. Was he as good as new? Was he well enough and strong enough to keep the pace that her rival, Lorraine Preston, would lead him? Sally could see Lorraine waiting on the platform.

The shrill whistle of the approaching train sent a stir of excitement through the crowd.

"Lorraine Preston, do you have the flowers?" someone called.

Lorraine Preston nodded smilingly and moved forward on the platform. She was beautiful, a sleek, sophisticated blonde.

When Sally looked at Lorraine, she more than ever resented her own dark hair that fell in tight little curls around her face. It never would behave and lie in smooth even waves. Almost angrily she pushed a stray lock back from her forehead.

The train stopped. Dan Selby came down the coach steps to the station platform, a broad smile on his face. Then Lorraine was presenting the flowers and looking up at him adoringly.

Dan was greeted excitedly on all sides.

Sally wanted to go forward to speak to him. She knew she really should. They had been friends and neighbors for years.

But suddenly she felt she couldn't be casually friendly, with appropriate words of welcome, when all she wanted to say was, "Dan, darling, you're home at last. I'm so glad, so glad."

SHE TURNED away. She might as well start along for the factory. During the war she had done defense work, but now with reconversion underway, her job would soon be over. She was glad, too, for she was tired. She had worked hard to help bring Dan and other boys like him home.

Dan was home at last, so she would have to find some other way to ease the heartache she felt. She had loved Dan for a long time, even before he went away to war. She knew he was engaged to Lorraine Preston and that her own love was hopeless, but it was there to reckon with, to struggle against.

She had almost reached the end of the platform when she heard her name called.

"Sally! Sally Drake! Where are you going?"

It was Dan's voice. He had seen her and was striding swiftly after her, ignoring Lorraine's protest and the tolerant smiles of the crowd. Sally noticed that Dan limped a little, his face, brown and smiling though it was, showed signs of strain.

"Hello, Dan." Sally controlled her voice with difficulty. "It's nice to see you home again."

"Hello, yourself, and what do you mean by running away?"

"I wasn't running away. I'm due at the plant in a few minutes."

"You're working in a factory!" Dan's keen eyes took in her faded blue blouse, slacks, and worn sweater.

A warm color swept into her cheeks. She knew how unfavorably she must compare with Lorraine Preston.

"Little Sally Drake!" Dan spoke almost wonderingly. "Why you've grown up—and you're beautiful."

Sally's eyes opened wide with astonishment.

"Dan Selby, you're crazy!"

Dan laughed.

"Now I know I'm home, and am I glad!"

"Of course you're glad, darling," Lorraine Preston said as she joined them. Her voice was velvet soft, but her eyes had little sparks of anger burning in them as she looked at Sally. "Sorry to break up this beautiful reunion. There are several hundred people waiting for Lieutenant Selby at City Hall. I'm sure it isn't right for one ordinary girl to—"

"I was just going, Lorraine," Sally interrupted. "Take Dan along to the celebration. I know he'll just love it. He makes the most wonderful speeches."

Sally actually giggled at the thought of how Dan would detest the whole affair.

"Sally Drake, you little—" Dan began, but Lorraine cut in impatiently.

"Are you coming, darling, or shall I go on and offer excuses?"

"I'm coming," muttered Dan, looking after Sally, who had already turned away. "But I can't understand how such a perfectly swell kid can succeed in making me madder than any other six people."

"It couldn't be because you're in love with her?" asked Lorraine icily.

Whether she wanted Sally to hear or not, Lorraine spoke loudly enough for the words to carry quite clearly.

Sally almost held her breath. Involuntarily she slackened her pace for Dan's reply.

"In love with Sally?" he insisted. "Don't be ridiculous! We're just good friends. Besides, I'm engaged to you, and that should mean something."

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"It certainly should," came Lorraine's sharp retort as Sally hurried on.

She couldn't bear to hear any more. She loved Dan Selby with all her heart. More than anything else in the world she wanted to see him happy. During the first few minutes of what was intended to be a gloriously happy home coming, she had only succeeded in making him angry and starting a quarrel between him and Lorraine.

At the plant she worked hard for the next eight hours.

When she got home, she was so tired she went to bed, and in spite of her worries over Dan she fell asleep almost immediately.

The next morning she heard a long, shrill whistle under her window. Sally jumped out of bed and caught up her robe. Then she stopped in the middle of the room. The day had long since passed when she had jumped out of bed starry-eyed to find out what her playmate next door had thought up for the day.

The whistle sounded again. She drew her robe closely around her and went to the window. She leaned out a little, in what she hoped was a dignified manner.

"Hello, lazy, are you going to sleep all day?" called Dan.

"All day!" cried Sally. "Do you realize I work hard and need my sleep?"

"Sorry, Sally, but please come down," Dan pleaded. "I've got to talk to you."

"All right," Sally answered and turned to dress.

She didn't dare to think of what Dan wanted to say to her. It made her heart beat fast. She wanted to be careful not to let Dan know how she felt about him.

A LITTLE later she went down to meet Dan. She was dressed in a pale blue linen dress. Her dark curls were held back by a narrow satin ribbon. She looked about sixteen years old and knew it. She didn't care. Dan was lost to her anyway, and nothing else mattered.

"What took you so long?" asked Dan. "You used to be able to make it in five minutes."

Sally fixed him with a withering look. "I didn't wash behind my ears then."

"Oh, so that's it?"

They both laughed happily.

"Feel like walking?" asked Dan. "We might take a little walk before breakfast. Nothing like it for getting up an appetite. Besides, I couldn't sleep. Getting up early gets to be a habit, I guess."

"I know," replied Sally. "Where shall we go?"

"Anywhere," Dan said.

His voice had lost its early gaiety. It was suddenly grim.

Sally's heart contracted. Hardly realizing what she did, she slipped her hand into his.

"I know a swell place. Centretown Bridge Park. They've fixed it all over with benches along the walk and a little nook with a fountain. It's going to be a memorial—I mean it will be a good place to rest before we start back. You can't expect me to walk for hours without resting."

Sally had noticed that Dan's slight limp was a little worse today. He was tired. He would need a place to rest.

Dan's fingers closed tightly around Sally's.

"Sally, you're swell," he said huskily.

It was a pleasant walk, but there was little said.

Dan seemed to be content just to walk along, holding tightly to Sally's hand and making an occasional comment on the scenery. Sally wondered what he had been so anxious to talk about when he had called her earlier, but she didn't ask. She followed his mood and tried to keep from dreaming wild dreams as Dan's hand clasped hers.

Back home again, Dan turned to Sally.

"Thanks a lot, Sally. I feel better. It's just what I needed."

"I enjoyed it, Dan. Any time—"

She hesitated, but Dan did not answer. He seemed to be lost in thought. Sally flushed.

"Goodby, Dan, I've got things to do."

"Wait," Dan spoke abruptly. "Sally, something is worrying me and—well, I don't want to bother Lorraine about it. She might not understand."

"What is it, Dan?" Sally said quietly, but she almost dreaded what he might say.

"Sally, I'm not a hero, a show horse or anything like that. There are millions of others. There are thousands who will never get back to show off."

His voice had risen, strained with emotion. She saw that his hands were trembling.

Sally wanted to throttle Lorraine Preston.

"I don't want to hurt Lorraine's feelings," Dan went on. "She's been swell about writing and about waiting for me. I don't

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want her to think I am ungrateful for all she's done."

Sally was getting angrier by the minute. If it had not been that Dan was rich and by far the best catch in town, she was sure that Lorraine would never have waited for him.

"Dan Selby!" Sally cried. "What's the matter with you? You've been in combat. You've got medals for bravery. You dope, you've got to solve your own problems. Are you a man or—"

"A mouse? I believe that's the approved ending," Dan said, his lips twisting in a wry smile. "Sorry I bothered you." He turned away. "It's only that I thought you would understand."

There was a hurt expression in his eyes, and his shoulders drooped.

"Dan! Dan!" Sally cried. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. Oh, I've got a rotten disposition. If there's anything I can do to help, I'll be glad to. Anything!"

"Thanks, but it is not your problem."

"Oh, Dan, don't be angry!" she pleaded.

Involuntarily she reached out one hand to him. She had meant to be so strong, so impersonal. She hadn't intended the panic in her voice nor the quick little quiver of her lips. She hadn't meant it, but it was out.

A hot flush of shame dyed her cheeks.

Dan turned back toward her, and now he took both her hands in his. His dark eyes looked deep into hers. He seemed to be studying her intently.

"I'm not angry," he spoke in a low voice. "I guess I resented being told to stand on my own feet, but it's the best way, Sally, the only way. Thanks, dear, thanks a lot."

He gave her hands a warm little squeeze and released them. Then, without another word, he left her.

Sally watched him go. He held himself erect, and the slight limp was scarcely noticeable.

"Dan!" Sally's lips formed the word but no sound came.

Her heart was heavy with the cold certainty of loss. In spite of herself, tears came to her eyes.

SALLY knew she must face the truth. Dan had come to her with his problem as he would to a friend or a sister. Dan loved Lorraine and was troubled the way things were. He couldn't go to Lorraine because he did not want to worry her nor to hurt her feelings.

"I'm a fool, a little fool," she told herself bitterly.

She had known all along that she meant absolutely, nothing to him. Somehow she had solved his problem, answered the questions that were bothering him, and now—Sally bit her lips to keep them from trembling—he was rushing off to Lorraine.

Sally didn't deceive herself in the least. Dan's quick recovery and his loving pat on the arm meant only one thing. She had cleared up his doubts about Lorraine, and he was happy again.

Well, she asked herself angrily, what was she feeling sad about? Wasn't it Dan's happiness that she wanted more than anything else in the world? She sighed deeply. Thank goodness there was work to be done.

Scarcely an hour later, Lorraine Preston arrived to see Sally. She walked rapidly up the path, and Sally could tell that for some reason Lorraine was angry—very angry.

"You're a fine one," she greeted Sally, "telling Dan a pack of lies, getting him all worked up about the job we all had to do. He thinks I still spend my days at the Red Cross or slaving in a hospital."

"Well, don't you?" Sally asked mildly.

"No, I don't. Why should I? There are plenty of people who like to do those things."

"And aren't you interested?" Sally still spoke quietly.

"Well, I don't intend—"

"Do you love Dan?" Sally asked abruptly.

"Why, how dare you ask?"

"Because I don't want to see Dan hurt. If you don't do some kind of work that's useful, you'll lose him."

"Meaning you?" Lorraine demanded.

Sally eyes flashed.

"Meaning he'll have no use for you."

"If you think I'm going to spend my time in a stuffy clinic, you're crazy. Dan Selby is not the only man in the world."

"No, there's always Jeff Hammond," Sally retorted meaningly.

She had seen Lorraine with him many times. Jeff had done essential work, essential but entirely safe, and all during the months Dan had been away Lorraine had been going out with him.

Lorraine's eyes blazed.

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"That's none of your business."

"I'm making it my business if you double-cross Dan."

The look that Lorraine flashed at Sally was one of pure hatred.

"Don't you think Dan can take care of himself? Just because you're in love with him—"

Sally's face went white.

"Don't you dare say such a thing."

Lorraine smiled maliciously.

"I know how to keep quiet, and I will, providing you do. If you interfere in my affairs, I'll tell Dan you are in love with him, that you are jealous of me, and that every word you tell him about me is a lie."

With that, Lorraine walked away, leaving Sally standing with hands clenched and tears of fury in her eyes—and with the agonizing pain of defeat in her heart.

"This is the tomorrow Dan's been dreaming of," she said between clenched teeth.

Turning, she went slowly to her room to get ready for work.

During the next few days Sally didn't see Dan. She read about him in the local papers. Every day he appeared at one or two affairs, and nearly always Lorraine Preston was mentioned with him.

Sally tried to put the whole thing out of her mind. She began dating boys in the shop where she worked, boys who had been begging her to go out with them. They were nice boys. Two of them were out of the Army on physical discharges, the other had held an essential war job from the beginning.

She would have been very happy if she hadn't happened to be in love with Dan, completely and irrevocably in love with him.

The next time Sally ran into Dan, she was just returning from work. She had reached her own gate when Dan came swinging along, whistling a little tune and looking very happy and very handsome.

He still wore his uniform. It looked quite new and very imposing with its row of bright campaign ribbons. Dan was apparently happy in living the life of the town's number one hero.

"Hello, neighbor," he greeted her gaily.

"Why, good evening, Lieutenant," Sally replied, and she couldn't keep an edge from her voice. "You're looking well and very handsome. The uniform certainly becomes you, as you have noticed, no doubt."

DAN'S eyes twinkled with amusement. "Why, thank you, Sally. You're looking —er—" His glance swept slowly over her slight, taut figure, never missing a detail of the faded blue shirt and slacks work outfit. "Well, I've seen you look lovelier."

"I'm sorry if you are disappointed, but this is the required uniform at the shop," Sally said sarcastically.

"Oh, I understand how it is," Dan grinned. "You don't really look bad, you know. Kind of cute, in fact."

"Thanks." Sally was getting angrier by the minute.

"Some girls can get away with slacks and shirt and the like, but take a girl like Lorraine—"

"You take her," flared Sally. "Why don't you marry her and have it over with before—"

She gulped. She had almost said the wrong thing, but apparently Dan had not noticed.

"Well, it's like this," Dan began good-naturedly. "I'm afraid I wouldn't make a very good husband right now. I'm too restless. The war, you know. It affects some fellows that way."

Dan was actually chuckling.

"Dan Selby!" Sally's anger could be controlled no longer. "So they've finally sold you on that hero stuff. I'm disappointed in you."

"So you don't think I'm a hero?" he said, and when she tried to turn away, he caught her hand and drew her toward him. "Lorraine does." His voice grew suddenly serious. "Sally, what do you think of me?"

"Does it matter?" she asked sharply.

What right had he to be so cruel? If he suspected that she cared for him, why should he want to humiliate her? He wasn't the Dan she had known so long and loved so much. He was the Dan that Lorraine had made, and he seemed satisfied.

"Of course, it matters," he said. "We've been friends for years. I'd be interested in knowing your opinion of me."

"All right, then. I think you're a conceited, egotistical young man, satisfied to rest on your laurels, afraid to go ahead and live, afraid to face tomorrow."

She snatched her hand away from him, and, turning, hurried past him. Dan's mocking laugh that followed her didn't help to make her feel any better.

Several days passed before she saw Dan again. Then he came over to her house early

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in the morning and whistled under her window.

"Coming right down," she called to him and dashed into her clothes.

Perhaps such eager haste was not entirely proper, but she didn't care. Dan needed her again—at least, she hoped he did.

But Dan's manner was smilingly confident. He didn't in the least seem to need help from anyone.

"Sally, I'm going away for a couple days on business. I just want to say goodby and to ask you to keep an eye on Lorraine."

Sally's breath caught. Had he heard about Jeff Hammond? Apparently he hadn't because he continued to speak.

"She'll probably be lonely. Since I've been home, we've been together a lot. I thought maybe you two girls could get together this evening. Movies or something, just to make the time pass more quickly. I'll be home by tomorrow evening sure."

"I'm afraid, Dan, that Lorraine wouldn't care to spend the evening with me. She isn't exactly fond of me."

"Nonsense," retorted Dan. Then suddenly his voice was urgent. "Do it for me, Sally. It's very important."

"All right, Dan, if you want me to."

"Thanks, Sally, you're a pal."

With that, he was gone.

A pal! Sally choked on a sob and blinked back tears. She didn't want to be a pal to Dan. She didn't want to spend the evening with Lorraine either, but she would for Dan.

So she telephoned Lorraine.

"Dan had an idea you might be lonely this evening with him away. He thought we might get together and go to a movie or something."

Lorraine was surprisingly sweet.

"I'd love to, Sally, but you know how Dan and I have been running around. Something every evening. I'm so tired I've just got to have a night to rest. I planned on going to bed early. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind?" Sally was overjoyed, but she managed to conceal it. "Of course, I don't mind. I'm sure you need some rest."

"It's sweet of you not to mind. Some other time we'll go to the movies together."

"That will be nice." Sally replied, hating herself for pretending. "Goodby, Lorraine."

"Goodby, Sally, and thanks again."

It was late that evening when she saw Dan's car pull into his yard next door. For some unknown reason he had returned early. She wondered if he would call Lorraine. He probably would. So what? He would find she had gone to bed early. That was all—unless—.

What if Lorraine hadn't been telling the truth.

SALLY hurried to the telephone and called Lorraine's number. Lorraine's mother answered. No, Lorraine was not there. She had gone out and she would not be home until late. No, she didn't know where she had gone. Somewhere with Dan Selby, she thought.

Sally thanked Mrs. Preston. Hurrying away from the phone, she went straight out the back door and down the street, past Lorraine's house and on toward the center of town. With luck she could get the local taxi to drive her out to the roadside inn where Lorraine usually went with Jeff Hammond. With luck Lorraine would be there, and Sally could get her home before Dan could find out.

When Sally reached the Green Tree Inn, she found Lorraine there—with Jeff, of course. Quickly crossing to their table, Sally stood looking down at Lorraine, her dark eyes angry.

"Lorraine Preston, why did you lie to me?"

"How dare you follow me here?" Lorraine's face was white with fury. "If you don't mind your own business, I'll—"

"Wait a minute, darling," Jeff Hammond interrupted while his eyes on Sally were lighted with a new interest. "Don't be so inhospitable. I think our guest is utterly charming. Won't you ask her to join us? You've forgotten to introduce us."

"If she stays, I'll go. I won't—"

"Quiet!" commanded Sally in a low tone. "Here's Dan. For heaven's sake, Lorraine, remember."

"What is he doing here," asked Lorraine in sudden panic. "Did you—"

"No. He was probably looking for you. Remember, we are supposed to be together."

"What about me?" Jeff asked. "You might let me in on this."

Sally turned to him quickly.

"You're with me. I'm your date."

"You're a very beautiful date, and I'm charmed," said Jeff.

Lorraine flashed a quick glance of hate at Sally, who had moved her chair closer to Jeff's.

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Dan had seen them now and was coming toward them. Lorraine greeted him with a smile. Sally avoided meeting his eyes. She kept her attention centered on Jeff, who seemed completely satisfied.

"Why, darling, what a lovely surprise!" Lorraine exclaimed. "I missed you so."

"I thought you and Sally were going to a movie," Dan replied.

He was not smiling.

Sally forced herself to meet his glance as she said, "I had a date with Jeff, and I brought Lorraine along."

"Why didn't you tell me when I asked you to keep Lorraine company this evening? Why didn't you say that you had a date?"

"I didn't want to refuse you, Dan," said Sally, "And I knew that Jeff wouldn't mind if I brought Lorraine."

"Anything Sally does is all right with me," agreed Jeff generously.

Dan regarded him coldly.

"What Sally does is usually all right, but sometimes she makes very bad mistakes."

"Sorry, you're disappointed in me," Sally retorted, "but it doesn't make any difference now. You're here, and you might as well take Lorraine along with you so that Jeff and I—" she hesitated.

"Can be alone," Jeff finished for her.

"Yes," nodded Sally.

Then Dan did a strange thing.

"You both are coming with me," he said quietly. "I'm taking you girls home. It's late, and I feel responsible."

"You needn't," Sally flashed.

Illogically she was angry at Dan for insisting that she leave with him and Lorraine. At the same time she felt suddenly happy that he cared enough to be so interested in her safety.

"I'll take good care of Sally," Jeff said. "You and Lorraine run along."

Lorraine flashed Jeff a glance of mingled surprise and hate.

"Come along, Dan. They evidently want to be alone."

"I'm taking Sally along with us," Dan insisted, and his eyes challenged Jeff.

Jeff shrugged amicably.

"Is it all right if I come along, too, just to see Sally home? She is my date, you know, and it seems proper."

"All right," agreed Dan.

Outside, Sally remembered that Jeff must have his car there. Dan was remembering, too.

"You can ride along with us if you want to, Hammond," said Dan. "You'll have to pick up your car some other time."

"Suits me," Jeff replied, and he took Sally's arm. "You're a swell kid," he whispered as they walked toward Dan's car. "But you're wasting your time. Why not forget about Dan Selby?"

Sally turned a frightened glance up at Jeff.

"You know?"

"Sure," Jeff replied, and then, quickly sensing Sally's panic, he said, "but I won't say a word about it."

"Thanks," muttered Sally, smiling up at Jeff gratefully.

Quickly Jeff's arm drew her closer.

"You're sweet," he breathed.

Before Sally could reply, Dan and Lorraine were beside them.

"Come on, here's the car," said Dan gruffly. "Let's get going. It's past my bedtime."

THE RIDE home was a silent one. They let Lorraine out first, then went on toward Dan's house. Dan drove straight into his own yard and stopped.

"Well, here we are," he said. "Sally lives just next door. I'll walk it with her."

"But she's my date." Jeff's persistence was maddening.

"Okay, so she's home now. Say your good night to her here, or don't you trust me."

"I trust you," replied Jeff. "I'm sure you wouldn't try to take Sally away from me. Besides, you have your Lorraine."

Then he turned and deliberately drew Sally into his arms. He bent his head to kiss her, his lips close to hers.

"Make it seem real," he whispered. "It will do a lot more good for you than chaperoning Lorraine."

Incredibly, Sally's heart skyrocketed. Jeff was really a darling and was trying to help her. Jeff was wise. Oh, if only he was right, too. It was no wonder that Sally's arms went tightly around Jeff's neck, and her heart was in the kiss she gave him.

"Thanks," said Jeff shortly and turned quickly away. "Good night, Selby. Take good care of Sally. You don't find them like her every day."

Dan did not answer, but he took Sally's arm firmly and started to guide her toward her front door.

"I can make it all right," managed Sally.

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"Yes, I know you can," said Dan quietly, "but I'd like to walk with you. You don't mind?"

"I don't mind." Sally was trembling.

They walked in silence to Sally's front door.

"Good night, Dan," Sally said in a low voice. "I hope everything is all right."

Dan seemed startled from a revery.

"Sally," he asked abruptly. "Are you in love with Jeff Hammond?"

Perhaps a smarter girl would have known how to evade, how to leave Dan in doubt but Sally couldn't.

"Oh, no, Dan. I like him but—," she caught her breath and went bravely on, "I don't love him."

Dan gave a satisfied little chuckle.

"Good. Jeff's all right, but he isn't the man for you. Sally, be careful." He chuckled again. "I wouldn't want anything to happen to my favorite neighbor."

Favorite neighbor indeed! Sally turned and hurried into the house. Blinding tears were in her eyes.

The next morning, the telephone rang. It was Lorraine.

"Well, Sally Drake, you did it! You found a way to make Dan notice you after all. Now he thinks he is indebted to you, owes you something."

"Dan knows me better than that," Sally replied quickly.

"At any rate, he thinks we should celebrate tonight and take you out to dinner and dancing at the Green Tree Inn. Says he is afraid he spoiled your fun last night. Wants me to ask Jeff, too, for you."

"Thanks, Lorraine, but I'm afraid I can't make it—tonight or at any other time. Dan owes me nothing and I don't want to be entertained by you or him."

"I suppose you want to keep him worrying about being indebted to you. Then he'll never feel like getting married. I'm sick of the whole affair. If you want him so badly—"

"Forget it, Lorraine. I'll be at the Green Tree Inn at eight with Jeff."

Sally banged down the receiver.

Sally dressed for the evening with great care. She chose an evening dress of deep rose pink. It was a beautiful dress, but Dan hated pink. That was why Sally selected it. Dan had always liked her hair brushed into simple natural curls. She went to a beauty parlor and had it set in the latest fashion. Jeff would love it, but Dan wouldn't. She smiled at herself in the mirror with grim satisfaction.

JEFF did love it and told Sally so.

"You're the loveliest thing I've ever seen," he whispered as he helped her with her coat. "I wish you felt about me the way you do about Selby. But you don't, and you never could. Lorraine and I could manage."

When Sally saw Dan that evening, her heart took a complete nose dive. His face showed signs of strain and worry. He should look happy. With Lorraine beside him, what reason could he have to look disturbed? Then Sally remembered Lorraine's words.

Dan was worrying about being indebted to her. She was glad that Jeff was very good looking and was being very attentive to her. It made it easier for her to play up to him.

The evening must be a huge success and leave Dan feeling free of any indebtedness to her.

Sally sighed. What did it matter if her heart ached? She would manage somehow, and Dan would be so very happy.

It was hardest when she was in Dan's arms dancing. She fought to keep her hand in his steady and her touch on his shoulder light. She wanted so to lean a little closer, to let her cheek touch his.

Then something happened, and the carefully planned evening was suddenly completely upset.

A young Marine had spied Dan, and he was making his way across the crowded dance floor.

"Dan Selby!" he exclaimed. "Gosh, it's good to see you! They patched you up, I see. You're even dancing."

The other dancers smiled tolerantly, making way for him to reach Dan. Then, as so often happens, there was a lull in almost everyone's conversation. Polite well-meaning people who should have continued to mind their own business, were listening.

"Glad to see you, Banter," Dan said. "The medics did pretty well by you, too, I see."

"Sure, I'm fine."

They moved nearer to the table where Jeff and Lorraine sat. Sally glanced at Lorraine. She was frowning.

"Dan, if you'll explain to Jeff and Lorraine, I'd like to dance with your friend,"

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said Sally. "You know what we think of a Marine hero. In fact, I know a lovely girl I can introduce him to."

Johnny Banter beamed.

"This must be your girl, Selby. The one you told me about that last night on Iwo Jima. Remember?"

Sally wanted to protest. Lorraine looked angry now. Why didn't Dan say something? Before Sally could say a word, the young marine went on.

"So this is Sally. Come on, let's dance. I'd be proud to dance with Dan's girl."

"Dan Selby," It was Lorraine's voice, seething with fury. "I'd like to talk to you."

"Coming," Dan replied, unperturbed, and he went to join Lorraine and Jeff.

"Let's dance," said Johnny Banter.

Sally moved mechanically into his arms.

"Let's," she said.

"About that girl you were going to introduce me to. That's awfully nice of you, but you see there is a girl already. I was on my way to see her but I stopped in here a minute and saw Dan. I hope you don't mind if I run along after this dance."

"No, I don't mind," Sally replied dazedly.

She glanced toward their table. Dan was sitting there alone. He was staring at something that lay in the palm of his hand.

Sally thought she would never get Johnny safely on his way. As soon as she could, she made her way to Dan.

"Dan!" she cried, sinking into the chair opposite him. "Where's Lorraine?"

"Gone. Jeff's taking her to the roadhouse at Five Forks. Thinks it is more exciting there."

"Oh, Dan, I'm sorry. That boy, Johnny! Oh, why did he have to make such a mistake?"

"He didn't make a mistake," Dan said quietly. "We didn't make mistakes on Iwo Jima, and Johnny remembered. That's all."

Sally's heart leaped with such wild hope that it made her dizzy. Then she firmly bade it be calm. There must be no mistake now.

"Dan, you're engaged to Lorraine. If you explain to her that there was a mistake—"

"I *was* engaged to Lorraine," Dan corrected quietly, "and there was no mistake. Sally, let's get out of here."

In a daze Sally moved toward the door. If it had not been for Dan's guiding hand on her arm, she wondered if she ever would have made it.

Outside in Dan's ramshackle old car, now back in repair again, Dan drew Sally into his arms.

"Wait, Dan," Sally pleaded. "Only a few days ago you came to me because you were worried about Lorraine."

"Not about Lorraine," Dan said, "but about being dragged around and placed on exhibition. I've known for a long time that I wasn't in love with Lorraine, only I had to wait and give her time to discover that. We weren't meant for each other. Sally!" Dan's voice was husky and trembled with emotion. "Darling, I was so afraid I might lose you. Last night when I saw you in Jeff Hammond's arms, I nearly went mad."

"He told me to kiss him like that to impress you. He guessed I loved you. But I didn't think it would do any good. I thought you loved Lorraine. I didn't know you loved me."

Sally said the words softly as though she were afraid to break the spell.

"You know it now, sweetheart," Dan said softly, "I've always loved you really. You do love me a little, don't you, Sally?"

"A little?" Sally's voice trembled. "So much that I can't believe that it is true that you love me. Dan, are you sure?"

"Very sure," he replied huskily.

His lips on hers convinced her, and she nestled closer in his arms with a happy sigh.

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"Russ, darling, I don't care whether you're a hero or not!"

I Love a Hero

By ROSE GEORGE

Maryrose was too ambitious for her returned veteran, and led him down a blind alley of misunderstanding and heartache!

DURING the two years Russ was overseas, I, Maryrose Blake, had imagined his homecoming a thousand times. I would be waiting at the Hillsbridge station with his mother and dad. I would be looking my prettiest in my gabardine suit, my jet-black hair caught in a lilac-gray snood.

Before the train even stopped, Russ would jump off, grab me in his arms, hug and kiss me. There would be a quiet little dinner at his home that night, and later we would walk on Willow Lane together and make definite plans about our getting married.

He would get back his old job, radio mechanic in Bradley's store on Central Street. For the time being, we would live with his

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parents, who would fix up their attic as a little apartment for us. We would be blissfully happy there, for we loved each other terrifically.

That was how I visioned Russ' homecoming. That was all I wanted, hoped for, prayed for.

But how utterly different the actuality was! For Russ came home a hero!

He had been a paratrooper. In Italy, while his five-man patrol was pinned down by enemy fire, he had advanced alone, crawling on his stomach, under fire from three different machine-gun nests, and with his tommy-gun, single-hand destroyed one of the nests. Later, he had returned and wiped out the other two also.

Yes, Russ Ordwell, twenty-four, modest, slow-speaking small-town mechanic had done this!

So his homecoming was different from my wildest dreams. A crowd of over a thousand was waiting for his train, cheering, waving flags. A brass band was playing. When he stepped off, his parents and I could hardly get to him in the crush.

At the town hall, the Mayor presented him with a watch and a gold plaque. Quiet little family dinner that night? Our church's Women's Auxiliary gave a supper for two hundred in his honor. Instead of walking in Willow Lane with me, whispering, kissing, he spent the evening shaking hands with his admirers.

Russ was the only Hillsbridge boy who had won the Congressional Medal, and the excitement over him was at fever-heat for days. Everybody wanted him for dinner. His picture was in every shop-window:

WELCOME HOME RUSS ORDWELL, OUR WAR HERO!

Crowds formed when he appeared. Compliments, praise, gifts were showered upon him.

And yet with all this Russ did not lose his head. He remained the same lovable, level-headed lad with the nice grin and drawling manner. No, it wasn't he who was changed by the adulation, the brass bands. Of all people—it was I!

Without being aware of it, the respect and envy I got as Russ' fiancée, the reflected glory, slowly gave me a new slant on things. By the time Russ and I had a chance to discuss our future, I had completely new ideas about it.

SINCE the death of my parents I had made my home with my sister, Julia, her husband and their two boys. That spring evening Russ and I sat on the porch with his arms about me, talking quietly because the two kids were asleep.

"Maryrose," he said with a sigh, "I'm sick of all this hero fuss. Tomorrow I go to Bradley's and get my old job back." He cupped my chin, looked deep into my eyes. "And when do you want the wedding bells to ring?" he said huskily.

"Look, Russ," I said quietly, "I've been thinking about things. I don't think you should take that job of yours with Bradley."

His blue eyes were wide. "Maryrose, you're kidding, aren't you?"

My lips tightened. "Oh, no, Russ! I mean it."

"But why shouldn't I go back to my old job? That's how we planned it before I went away, isn't it?"

"Yes. But things are different now. When you went away, Russ, you were just one of the boys here. Now you're Hillsbridge's biggest war hero. Why should you go back to being a radio-mechanic?" I was intoxicated with my pride in him. "Any job you want can be yours for the asking now. It's the chance of a lifetime for you to get ahead, don't you see?"

He listened, perplexed, brows knitted. "Well, there is something to that, I suppose, honey. But—er—if I don't go back to Bradley, what shall I do?"

"There are lots of better jobs available," I said enthusiastically. "Just don't be in a hurry. Anybody in the world would be glad to have a hero like you working for them!"

"Can that hero stuff, baby," he said. "I'm fed up with it. If you want me to get a better job, I'll do it. But do you realize it means we'll have to postpone our marriage?"

"I do," I said gently. "But I feel it's more important for you to make something of yourself just now than even getting married. We'll be all the happier for it in the future. Believe me, darling, we will."

His hands dropped to my shoulders. "Okay, baby, whatever you say. Orders is orders!" And then he kissed me.

I was sure I had done the right thing in persuading him. I did not realize I was giving Russ, so modest and fine, an inflated idea of what the world owed him because he was a hero. I was only nineteen, utterly inexperienced. An exaggerated pride in my hero

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had turned my head so completely that I rushed headlong into trouble and heartbreak.

In obedience to my wishes Russ told Mr. Bradley he was not coming back to his old job. Then he started looking for something better.

He got plenty of offers. Sheridan's Haberdashery on Central Street wanted him as a salesman, considering he would be a great drawing card because of his war record. Nichols & Co., real estate, wanted him too. And there were plenty of other opportunities. I made him turn them all down.

"Something better—you deserve something better!" I said over and over.

Almost every evening he arrived at my house excited over some job he had been offered. And each time he was as disappointed and bewildered as a child when I said no.

"Baby, I don't get you!" he would remonstrate. "In your opinion nothing is good enough for me. I hardly know where to look any more."

And, still completely befogged by the grand ideas I had of what was rightfully due him, I answered:

"Don't throw yourself away, Russ. You've just got to find something really big!"

"I'm disgusted with doing nothing!" he cried. "According to you there isn't a job in Hillsbridge good enough for me. What am I supposed to do now? Where am I supposed to look?"

I had been getting shaky myself. But I still had one card to play. A week before I had written to my rich Uncle Josh who owned a big canning plant in Oakdale, upstate. I had told him about Russ and his Congressional Medal and asked him if there wasn't a good opening in his plant for him.

I had received his answer only that morning. It said he would be happy and proud to find something good in his plant for my fiancé. He suggested Russ and I come spend that very week-end with Aunt Ella and himself.

He wanted to size Russ up, see where he could best fit into his organization.

I showed the letter to Russ.

"Aren't you glad now I didn't let you take one of those little jobs here in Hillsbridge?" I said in triumph. "Uncle Josh employs hundreds of people. He'll surely find something good for you. See what he says—he'll be 'happy and proud'!"

Russ was impressed. "I take it all back, honey," he said. "I guess you were right after all!"

SATURDAY afternoon, full of optimism, Russ and I took the train to Oakdale. Aunt Ella and Uncle Josh welcomed us most cordially to their impressive Georgian Colonial home.

Uncle, who had never met Russ, gave him a quick, keen glance and seemed pleased with him. Aunt Ella, white-haired and plumpish, kittenishly declared Russ was the handsomest war hero she had ever met.

Chatting gayly, we went into the garden, where Aunt Ella showed us her wonderful roses and new bird fountain. It was beautiful. A slender pedestal carved with a design of flowers and foliage widened into a basin surmounted by a lovely statuette of Cupid.

"This was made for me by Linda Ryland, the sculptress," explained my aunt. "She's coming for the week-end too. You'll meet her at dinner tonight. I'm sure you'll like her."

Yes, from the moment we arrived at Uncle Josh's, everything was perfect. Until dinner that night, where we met this Miss Ryland.

She was glamorous, in an ultra-sophisticated way, her ash-blonde beauty cleverly set off by a perfectly cut, simple black gown. In my own inexpensive hyacinth-blue crepe, I felt completely outclassed.

And then, with a sick feeling, I noticed she was entirely ignoring her escort, a young man named Bill Smith who during the war had been an ensign in the Navy, and was definitely making a play for Russ. She regarded him through half-closed lids, gave him dazzling smiles, talked only to him. I had always realized Russ was attractive to women, with his wide shoulders, slim hips, rough-hewn features. But never before this had I been afraid some other woman would cut me out with him. I made up my mind to get him out of Miss Ryland's reach as soon as possible.

But, dinner over, Uncle Josh took my arm, steered me into the library and started discussing Russ with me. He asked me what kind of a job I expected for him.

"Well, you know his war record, Uncle Josh," I said glibly. "He ought to get something really big, don't you think so?"

Uncle Josh puffed at his cigar and asked me what work Russ had done before the war. I told him. My uncle cleared his throat.

"My dear Maryrose," he said quietly, "you

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have some odd ideas in your pretty little head. Just because Russ is a war hero doesn't mean he's fit for a job he's had no training for. You don't really expect me to give a radio mechanic a big executive job in my plant just because he wears the Congressional Medal, do you?"

Then as I stared at him, utterly taken aback, he told me the best he could offer Russ was a job in his maintenance department, repairman on machinery, at thirty-five a week.

I was aghast. "Thirty-five!" I exclaimed. "Why, his radio repair job paid thirty-eight."

A sickening wave of disappointment rolled over me. In that one moment all my ambitious hopes for Russ were smashed to bits. I sat there in a sick daze.

Uncle Josh saw how I felt. But he went right on.

"My dear, for Russ' sake forget this idea that he's entitled to a big job just because he served his country well. If you've got any sense, you'll make him take this job in my maintenance department. He'll have every chance to better himself there. That's the best I can do."

For a moment I could not answer. The breath had been knocked out of me. For the first time I realized what a fog of illusion I had been living in since Russ had came home.

"I—I'll tell Russ of your kind offer, Uncle Josh," I said, dazed. "I'll make him take it. He always does what I say. Thank you, Uncle, thank you very much!"

Feeling that my whole world had collapsed, I made my way to the music room. Russ was sitting there deep in conversation with the glamorous Miss Ryland. As I came in, he gave me a vague smile and immediately turned to his companion again. Forlorn, miserable, I sat there a while. Then, jumping up, I ran out and up to my room. I flung myself upon the taffeta bedspread and burst into tears.

I spent a terrible night. Regret over the foolish mistake I had made in regard to Russ' career was mingled with a stabbing fear that Miss Ryland was winning Russ away from me.

But in the morning, the sunlight filtering through the blinds, the cheerful birds, revived my spirits. I went downstairs early. I found Russ on the terrace, alone. He greeted me with such a warm smile that I at once felt things couldn't be as bad as I had thought. Since the others were not down yet, the maid served breakfast for just the two of us on the terrace.

AFTER the maid cleared the table, I tactfully told him about my uncle's job for him. Russ' cheerfulness instantly vanished.

"A job in his maintenance department?" he repeated. "At thirty-five a week? Is that the best he can do for me? Ridiculous!"

"I—I don't think so, Russ. I think you ought to take it."

"Take this job after you made me turn down a dozen better ones? What's got into you anyhow?" His voice, usually so gently, was raw with indignation.

Patiently I tried to explain that I had been on the wrong track. It had been foolish, wrong, to expect people to give him an important job just because he had the Congressional Medal. We had to face the facts. He must take a job for which he was suited, however humble it was, a job like the one my uncle had offered, for instance.

For the first time my persuasive powers had no effect on Russ. He threw back his head cockily.

"You're one hundred per cent wrong!" he declared triumphantly. "There are all sorts of big opportunities around for a man like me. Why, only last night I got a wonderful chance to get into something really big—and what do you think of that?"

"What are you talking about?" I demanded.

"Miss Ryland!" he burst out excitedly.

And then, as I stared at him in amazement, he flung a veritable bombshell at me. It seemed that the sculptress wanted to make a statue of a war hero and had asked Russ to pose for it, in his full paratrooper equipment!

"She thinks I'll be the ideal model for a statue like that!" he cried. "In fact, meeting me here gave her the whole idea. I'm her inspiration!"

He went on raving like this. I hardly knew him. He talked not like the Russ I loved, but like a callow boy with a swelled head. Was it possible that he had changed so much in the course of a few hours? Was it Miss Ryland, with her sophisticated charms, her flattery who had done this to him? My heart sank.

"Well, what do you think of it, Maryrose?" His eyes were shining.

"Being the model for a statue—where is

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that going to get you, dear?" I asked timidly. "What kind of a career will it lead to?"

Impatiently he explained that when the statue was finished, he would be famous all over the country as its model.

"Miss Ryland says it'll get me a job in Hollywood!" he declared.

"Hollywood?" I gasped incredulously. "Hollywood?"

"You don't believe it, eh?" His voice was scornful. "Well, don't you worry. It's a cinch. Miss Ryland—Linda—knows all the right people, talent scouts, producers, everybody. She's lived there."

He went on, a mile a minute. The gist of it all was that Miss Ryland, with her experience, connections and influence, would mold a marvelous career for him. My heart was like lead. I could see he expected me to get as enthusiastic and excited as he. But I could not even look at him. He stopped short.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Don't you want me to go to Hollywood and make big money?"

"Russ," I said gently, "I want anything that's good for you. But I don't think this is."

"Oh, you don't understand!" he broke in irritably. "You wanted me to hold out for something big, didn't you? Well, this is it! Oh!" He jumped to his feet. "Here comes Linda!"

Crossing the terrace, in her frock of apple-green silk she looked as exquisite as a nymph and as sophisticated as Fifty-Seventh Street.

"I was just telling Maryrose about your wonderful proposition," cried Russ with boyish eagerness. "She doesn't quite see it yet. But I'm all for it. I'm crazy about it!"

"Swell!" said Linda coolly. "I knew you'd feel that way about it. Now another thing. I've been thinking. Look—instead of your coming to New York to pose in my studio, I'll move out to Hillsbridge for the summer. I always go to the country in the summer anyhow. I know there is a housing shortage, of course, but surely I can rent some old house with a barn and change it to a studio. What do you think of that idea?"

"Wonderful!" cried Russ. "I know just the place for you. The Bolton house out on Deerfield Lane. It's needed so much work on it that no one has wanted to rent it, and the owners would fix it up. But since you're willing to, I know you can get it!" He turned to me, standing there absolutely flabbergasted. "Maryrose, won't it be marvelous having Linda with us this summer?"

I managed to nod and smile. But my heart was like lead. . . . .

THE rest of my week-end was sheer misery. Linda and Russ were together constantly, discussing their project over and over. Several times I tried to show Russ how speculative and uncertain the whole idea was, but each time he impatiently brushed me aside and said I didn't understand.

When we took the train home Sunday night, I felt so low I hardly said a word to him the entire trip. By the time we got back to Hillsbridge, there was a definite wedge of disagreement between us.

Linda Ryland moved into the old Bolton house right after July first, with van loads of trunks and cases containing her sculpturing material, and after that I saw little of my fiancé. He was helping what four workmen Linda could get, to renovate and paint the barn.

He drove her car into town for supplies, worked in her large back garden. People began to talk, looked at me pityingly, tried to probe. I kept a stiff smile on my face and avoided the subject. I didn't want everybody to know something had gone wrong between Russ and myself, of the terrible fear in me that I was losing him.

Manlike, Russ acted as if everything were perfectly normal. He came around regularly Wednesday nights, took me to the movies. But he never mentioned our getting married any more.

"Why should he?" I thought lying awake nights fighting back the tears. "Why should he marry me, a quiet little small-town girl, when a glamorous woman like Linda Ryland is interested in him, helping him to a dazzling future?"

I thought of breaking our engagement myself. But I just could not get myself to the point. Lukewarm as his affection now was, I eagerly drank in all of it he chose to give me.

One afternoon I encountered Linda near the post-office. We were very polite with each other. I asked how the statue was coming along. "Just wonderful!" she answered, in her snobbish tones. Then she added, "Russ makes such a splendid model. You don't know how inspiring it is to work with a real war hero instead of a professional model!"

At another time when we happened to

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meet, she said condescendingly:

"Why don't you drop in and watch Russ pose for me tomorrow? You might find it interesting."

I thanked her, but had no intention of accepting this invitation. But I had not seen Russ in days and was hungry for a glimpse of him. So the following afternoon I walked the two miles out to the Bolton house.

Linda had transformed the old barn into a gorgeous sculptor's studio, with tapestries on the walls, a velvet divan strewn with bright pillows, bits of sculpture all over the place. When I came in, Russ was posing on the model's stand, in his paratrooper's uniform and full equipment. Linda, in slacks and smock, was working at a huge mass of clay. She smiled briefly and went right on with her work. Russ just nodded to me.

I seated myself on the divan. Linda worked quietly and intently. And Russ, holding his pose, was just as intent. Their project seemed to have created a bond between them, a much stronger one than the one between Russ and myself.

Hopelessness took hold of me. What was I doing here? Who wanted me? After a few minutes, I got up, said my good-bys and miserably went out. Neither of them tried to keep me.

The days dragged by. Russ and I were still engaged, but he never came to see me any more, and I ate myself up with regret and despair.

It was at the end of August that I received a formal invitation to her studio from Linda. She was giving a party to celebrate the completion of her statue, "War Hero." Remembering my first visit, my pride urged me not to go. But when the time came, I found myself taking the same two-mile walk to the Bolton house.

This time when I arrived, the studio was crowded with people, smoking, drinking, talking. The center of attraction was the huge finished model of "War Hero" on its heavy square pedestal. Cocktail glass in hand, in a sumptuous, clinging gown of red crepe, flushed with success, Linda swept carelessly toward me.

"Nice of you to come—do have a cocktail," she murmured, and swept away.

All the guests were Linda's smart friends from the city. I was the only one there from Hillsbridge. I was feeling horribly out of place when Russ suddenly spied me and came over.

"Hi, Maryrose, glad you came!"

His eyes had the same triumphant light as Linda's. He took me over to the statue. It had his wide, powerful shoulders, the bony structure of his face, the long limbs. Even I, who knew little about art, was impressed.

"It's swell, Russ, just swell!" I said.

But inside me I was saying, "It's not the statue I care about. It's *you, you* that I love. When will you come back to me, darling?"

He didn't read my heart. He smiled smugly.

"Yes, everybody likes it. But we're waiting for Mr. Ottfield to come and give his opinion."

He explained that Mr. Ottfield owned a famous art gallery in New York. If the statue met with his critical approval, he would exhibit it there and Linda's reputation would be made.

LINDA and all her guests were tensely waiting for this Mr. Ottfield to arrive, and when his car finally drove up, toward six, there was an excited babble of voices. He was small, white-haired, dapper, and wore pince-nez with a long black ribbon. As Linda took his arm and escorted him to the statue, there was a sudden hush. Every eye was upon him as he walked about "War Hero," examining it from every angle, lips pursed, face severe. Suddenly he turned.

"Linda, my girl, you've done it!" he said. "Power, integrity, heroism—they're all there!"

There was a burst of excited exclamations. When it was quiet again, Mr. Ottfield went on, congratulating Linda on having got such seriousness and depth into her work, predicting the statue would surely bring her fame as well as financial success. At this Linda for once lost her reserve. Intoxicated with joy, she kissed the dapper old Mr. Ottfield on both cheeks. Then she flung her arms rapturously about Russ.

"Did you hear that?" she cried. "I'm going to become famous! It certainly was a lucky day when I met you. And I'm going to put you over too, Russ. You'll be just as famous as I. Oh, darling, isn't it wonderful!"

And there, before the whole crowd, she kissed him on the mouth, as if he belonged to her and nobody else. And he—he held her tight and, his eyes burning, he kissed her right back.

An icy feeling gripped my heart. And

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when Linda had champagne brought in and the guests began to drinks toasts, I couldn't take any more. I moved cautiously to the door. I slipped out unnoticed.

The last thing I heard was Mr. Ottfield's thin, high-pitched voice.

"A real war hero for a model—that was an inspiration, Linda. What a selling point! We'll all cash in on it. It means a fortune!"

I hurried home, locked myself in my room. A sick certainty filled me. There was no use clinging to Russ any longer. I must be brave enough to give him his freedom. I sat down and wrote him a long letter, releasing him from our engagement.

The next morning I took it to the post-office. As I was climbing the steps, slowly, somebody called:

"Hi, Maryrose!"

My knees turned to water. "Hello, Russ!" Outwardly I was calm. But my letter seemed to be burning through my handbag.

Russ was full of news about Linda. Since the summer was about over, she was breaking up her Hillsbridge studio and moving back to New York.

"And how about you, Russ?" I asked breathlessly. "Going with her?"

"No. I'm following in a few days." He hesitated. Then, his tone forced and hollow, he said, "Er—just as soon as I get settled in New York, I'll write you, Maryrose, and you can come there and we'll be married."

Tears stung my eyes. I shook my head.

"No, Russ, you don't mean it."

"Why, of course I do!" he protested weakly.

"No, Russ, I don't belong in New York or in that new life you're leading, and you know it. I don't fit in with people like Linda or her sophisticated friends. If you're really set on going to New York and Hollywood, you and I had better call it quits. Here!" I jerked open my handbag, pulled out the letter. "This is for you. I was going to mail it. Take it!"

I thrust it into his hand and, with a stifled sob, ran down the steps and away from him.

The next day I got a reply from him, a short note:

Maryrose:

If that's how you feel about things, I suppose there's nothing I can say. I'm sorry it had to be this way. Good-by, Maryrose, and best of luck.

Russ

I felt as though the bottom had dropped out of everything. And what added to the pain was the knowledge it was all my fault. Linda might have turned his head, but she had only finished what I had begun. Well, it was all over. My life was shattered into a thousand bits—and it was all my own doing. I cried over that note of his all night.

Everybody in town was shocked to learn of our broken engagement. Julia and Charles, her husband, wanted to go see Russ and talk to him. I forbade it. Russ' mother was frantic, for she was fond of me. I begged her not to say anything to Russ about it.

A few days later I ran into her downtown. She told me Russ had left for New York the day before. She was heart-broken.

"I told him straight up and down he was a fool!" she exclaimed. "But it didn't do any good. He's gone after that woman!"

"I guess it just had to be like this, Mrs. Ordwell," I said quietly. "Don't worry about it, dear."

SUMMER melted into autumn. Instead of the happiness of marrying Russ and being his wife, I had the cruel task of trying to go on living here without him. Every day I faced the pitying glances, the whispers of the very people who had once envied me for being the fiancée of the town's war hero.

My heart wept night and day, but I busied myself with my two little nephews, spent all my spare time trying to help other returned veterans find homes. I tried my best to live with dignity and poise, but desolation and grief never left me. I prayed for time to pass. Perhaps that would dull my pain and longing.

One evening Mrs. Ordwell, Russ' mother, called up and asked me to come right over. Something important had happened. I dropped everything and ran.

She had just received a letter from Russ in New York and with it an engraved card of invitation to a private showing of Linda's statue at the Ottfield Galleries. Russ urged her to attend.

"Just imagine me dropping my household, the shopping and cleaning and canning, to travel sixty miles to look at a fool statue!" she snapped. "But why don't you go, Maryrose?"

"I?"

"Yes, I want you to go in my place!" she declared. "Somebody from his home town ought to be there. Now be sensible, Maryrose. You dress up in your best and go.

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For my sake, dear."

All kinds of fantastic ideas blazed up in my brain. New hope flared up. Who knew—even now something might happen to make everything right between Russ and me. Besides, since his ambition was to go to Hollywood, I might never see him again if I didn't take this opportunity. That settled it. I took a quick breath.

"Thank you, Mrs. Ordwell," I said. "I'll go—gladly."

After a dusty train ride, I reached the Ottfield Galleries, on East Fifty-Seventh Street, at close to five o'clock. I passed through a room hung with paintings into a larger room. It contained a single piece of art, the large bronze figure of a paratrooper—Linda's "War Hero."

It was surrounded by distinguished-looking men, women gorgeously befurred and bejeweled. I caught sight of Linda in a group of these. At sight of me her brows lifted, as though to say, "What are you doing here anyhow?" I froze in my tracks. Flushing, I walked away, my head down. I bumped into someone.

"Why—Maryrose! For pity's sake, what are you doing here?"

It was Russ. I was so pitifully glad to see him that I wanted to throw myself into his arms. But I forced myself to explain calmly that his mother had asked me to come here in her stead. He seemed to accept the explanation at its face value. He did not seem to realize I had come simply because I just could not tear him out of my heart.

Or maybe it didn't matter to him how I felt at all. His manner was casual and friendly.

We stood talking. People kept coming up to congratulate him extravagantly on having been the model for the statue. He seemed to have the world at his feet. All the frail hopes and dreams I had brought here vanished. Why had I been so foolish as to come? Nobody wanted me. Even Russ was only giving me a few moments of his time out of mere politeness, impatiently wishing I'd go.

A tall, spare man came striding into the room.

"That man was my Captain in the Army!" exclaimed Russ. "A great fellow. Discharged now. I ran into him on Fifth Avenue the other day and invited him to come here."

The two men shook hands heartily. Russ introduced me. "Captain Cameron," he said, giving the man his former title, "Maryrose Blake. Maryrose is an—er—old friend from my own home town."

The former Captain had a rugged, weather-beaten face and shrewd, alert gray eyes. I liked him at once. The three of us stood chatting and then Russ said, "Excuse me, folks, Linda wants me," and hurried off.

Captain Cameron and I went to take a look at the statue. Then we sat down on a bench.

"So you're from Hillsbridge too," he said. "An old friend of Russ', eh?" He gave me a shrewd, good-humored smile. There was a warmth and sympathy about him that put me entirely at my ease. He studied me a moment. "Seems to me Russ told me he was engaged to a home town girl. Er—it couldn't possibly be you now, could it?"

I turned away. "I *was* engaged to him. But the engagement was broken—by mutual consent."

"Oh. I'm sorry. May I—ask what was the trouble?"

WITHOUT sparing myself I told him how I had foolishly inflated Russ' ego and then how Linda had made matters even worse by promising to make him famous and get him to Hollywood—all because he was a war hero.

"So you broke your engagement just because you didn't want to stand in his way?" said the Captain shrewdly.

"Well—that's about it!" My voice broke.

Captain Cameron looked off to where Russ and Linda were standing together, Linda resting her white, bejeweled hand affectionately on Russ' shoulder.

"The young fool!" muttered the Captain.

A little later Russ came over to us. There was a smug smile on his face.

"Miss Ryland is taking a lot of us over to her studio for cocktails," he said. "Won't you two come along?"

Before I could speak up, Captain Cameron answered quickly, "We'll be delighted, Russ!"

After Russ left us, I looked up at the Captain.

"I don't want to go, Captain," I said. "I've had enough. I want to go home."

"Now you just come along and keep me company," he coaxed.

Under his gentleness there was something compelling. I smiled wanly.

"Okay," I said listlessly.

In Linda's penthouse, near the park, the sumptuous living room with its French win-

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dows gave on a terrace that was like a garden suspended cloudlike above the city. About two dozen people came along to her cocktail party.

Mr. Ottfield sat near the fireplace talking deferentially to a distinguished-looking man in his fifties. Someone told me he was Sinclair Madden, the millionaire newspaper publisher, whose hobby was art collecting. Russ was absorbed in talk with a thin, keen-eyed young man who, I discovered, was Jim Springer, a Hollywood talent scout. Maids in crisp uniforms were busily serving cocktails.

Captain Cameron and I sat in a corner. As he chatted with me, my eyes kept following Russ' every move. Everybody had something to say to him. People kept clapping him on the back. I heard his laugh ring out over and over, high-pitched, excited. That smug, conceited look of his never left his face. No, it wasn't the old Russ at all. He was completely spoiled. As I sat there, heavy-hearted, Linda got up on the model stand and clapped her hands for silence.

"Folks, I have great news!" she announced. "Mr. Madden has authorized me to tell you this. A photo of War Hero, in full life colors, will appear in the Sunday edition of all his newspapers soon! Isn't it wonderful!"

There was an outburst of applause. I heard someone near me say Mr. Madden had about been persuaded to buy the statue itself for his art collection. A moment later Russ came over to us excitedly.

"What do you know!" he said, almost breathless, "I'm going to have a screen test. Jim Springer is arranging it for me. He's sure I'm going to click. With all this publicity in the Madden papers, he's positive I'll get a Hollywood job." He threw out his chest swaggeringly and pounded it. "Hollywood, here I come!" he cried.

Intoxicated by his own importance, he turned abruptly and began to tell the same story to some other people.

Anguish cut through me. What a spectacle he was making of himself! Russ, who had been so modest, so fine, Russ who had conducted himself so nobly on the field of battle, was now acting like a conceited fool. The pity of it. My head went down.

Understanding my feelings, Captain Cameron tactfully took me out on the terrace for a little air.

Above us the sky of purple velvet was studded with stars. Below, the million lights of the city were like stars too. And all the stars of earth and sky wavered and ran together in my tears.

The Captain lit a cigarette. "So that's what happened to Russ since his discharge. He's become a phony. A fine war hero, he!"

I wiped away my tears. "I think I'll be going," I said dully. "I have to catch a train."

"Please don't!" he said quietly. "Take a later train. I want you to stay. I have a good reason." He patted my hand. "Trust me. You won't be sorry."

Our eyes met. There was a mysterious smile on his face. Somehow it gave me courage, new hope, I don't know why.

As we stepped back into the living room, I caught sight of Russ going out, escorting some people to the elevator. All the others had gone except Mr. Ottfield and Mr. Madden, who sat on the sofa with Linda, having a last cocktail. After leading me to a chair, the Captain stood before the fireplace.

"Excuse me, Miss Ryland," he said. "I have something important to say to you."

"Yes, Captain?" drawled Linda.

The two men started to rise, but the Captain said, "I'd like you gentlemen to hear this also. You'll both be interested."

"What in the world is it?" Linda asked.

"I'll come right to the point," said the Captain crisply. "It's about Russ' citation for heroism. I'm sorry to inform you all that he got it through an error. He's not entitled to his medal."

IT WAS as though a shell had just exploded. The three of them looked absolutely stunned. I myself uttered a gasp.

"A mistake?" quavered Linda. "How?"

"That first machine-gun nest he is supposed to have cleaned out was destroyed before he got to it. While I was in England, I talked with two of my wounded men in a hospital. I have a sworn statement from them that Russ did not clean out that Nazi nest!"

"Preposterous!" burst out Mr. Ottfield.

He was very much flustered. In contrast, Mr. Madden was icily calm.

"Let the Captain have his say, Ottfield. You state you have absolute proof Russ is not entitled to his medal, Captain?"

"Absolute!"

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I'll see the citation is rescinded, of course!"

Her eyes bleak, Linda cried, "But you can't do that, Captain. My statue will be

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absolutely worthless if you do. After all the publicity about my model being a real war hero—oh, I'll be the laughing stock of the country! Captain, you must keep quiet about it!"

"Captain, why have you kept quiet about it up to now?" asked Mr. Madden.

The Captain's eyes were steady. "I was inclined to let it ride, because Russ is a pretty brave lad at that. But tonight, when I saw how everybody was building on his reputation, making a good thing out of it, trying to make careers and money out of it, I decided it was time to stop it. And that's just what I'm going to do!"

Mr. Ottfield and Linda both began to protest vehemently. Mr. Madden cut them short.

"Quite right, Captain. I'm glad you told us. Otherwise I would have made a fine fool of myself." He turned on Mr. Ottfield. "The deal is off—no photos—no sale. Good night!"

"But Mr. Madden—" Mr. Ottfield, spluttering and foaming, rushed after him as he stalked toward the door. Just as they reached it, Russ came in. They went by him without a word. He was astonished.

"What's got into those two?" he asked.

Linda jumped to her feet. "Get out of here!" she cried to him. "Get out quick!"

Russ became white. "Why, Linda, what is this?"

"Captain Cameron has just told us everything. You didn't earn your citation. It's going to be taken away from you. You're a fake. And now my statue is worthless. After I spent months on it. After I got all that wonderful publicity for it!"

"Hey—wait a minute!" said Russ, but she ranted right on.

"You small-town upstart! I was going to do everything for you, and this is what I get for it! Ha—wait till Springer hears about this! Screen test! Hollywood!" She burst into laughter. "What a joke! You belong back in that hick town of yours—that's your speed!"

"Linda, just a minute. Let me explain."

She did not give him a chance. She kept on screaming insults at him, berating him. He went up and grabbed both her wrists.

"Linda, listen to me. You and I have been good friends—"

She laughed with piercing scorn. "Friends? Don't flatter yourself you ever meant anything to me, you hick! The only reason I took up with you was because I thought you were a war hero and I needed a model for my statue. Now get out—get out—get out!"

As Russ looked at her, open-mouthed, she flung herself on the sofa, pounding her heels and screaming that her career had been ruined, ruined. Russ turned and stared at us. That smug, complacent look was gone from his face now. He was like a man coming out of a dream.

I rushed over to him.

"Russ, darling," I cried, "I don't care whether you're a hero or not! I think you're wonderful. I love you. I always will. Oh, darling, don't look so unhappy!"

And I reached up and kissed him.

"Thanks, Maryrose, thanks," he said.

Then a most astonishing thing happened. Captain Cameron, who had been watching everything with a severe and forbidding air, came over to us. He clapped Russ on the shoulder. He didn't seem to be angry now.

"Russ, I'm sorry I had to do this," he said. Then, as I stared at him in sheer amazement, he went on, "Of course you're a real hero, Russ. You won your citation fairly and squarely. But I had to make up that story that cast doubt on your heroism. I had to do something to show up these people who had fastened on you and were trying to commercialize your heroism. I had to work fast, and I couldn't think of any other way. Will you forgive me?"

Russ was red. "Sure, Captain, I get it. It's okay by me!" He still looked dazed. "I guess I needed a good jolt like that. Thanks."

A WONDERFUL relief flooded me. Trembling with joy, I grabbed Russ' arm and smiled up at him. And at that moment I saw Linda, who had suddenly quieted down, slip off the sofa and swiftly come over to us.

"What's this?" she gulped. "Russ really *is* a hero after all?"

"That's exactly how it is!" said Captain Cameron coldly.

She gasped, turned to Russ. "Oh, Russ, darling, you must forget those dreadful things I said. I didn't mean them. I lost my head. Please, Russ—let's be friends again!" She gave him a ravishing smile.

Russ ignored it. "I see what friendship means to you, Miss Ryland. Thanks—I don't want any part of it. Come on, folks, let's get out of here!" He spoke fiercely. When we were out on the street, the Captain said:

"Don't worry about Madden, Russ. I'll put him straight and ask him to keep the story out of the papers. As for the statue, let Linda

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do what she likes with it. But I don't think she should use your name and fame for any more publicity, do you?"

"I'll write her a letter to that effect pronto!" declared Russ.

The Captain beamed. "Well, that's that! Now, when are you two kids going to be married? I'd like to be present."

I blushed. "Why Captain," I put in, "Russ still has his career to think of. Now that everything is okay, he can still get his screen test, get a Hollywood job and—and everything."

Russ glared at me lovingly.

"Maryrose," he said, "stop putting words into my mouth. I'm not taking any screen test and I'm not going to Hollywood. I'm through with all that stuff. I've learned where I belong and who I love."

He kissed me right then and there.

"Maryrose and I are going right back to Hillsbridge, Captain," he said then. "We'll get married and I'll get myself a job there—just like we planned before I went into the Army. No more hero stuff for me. I'm putting my ribbon and medal away and—and—well, maybe some day we'll show them to our kids, and that's all!"

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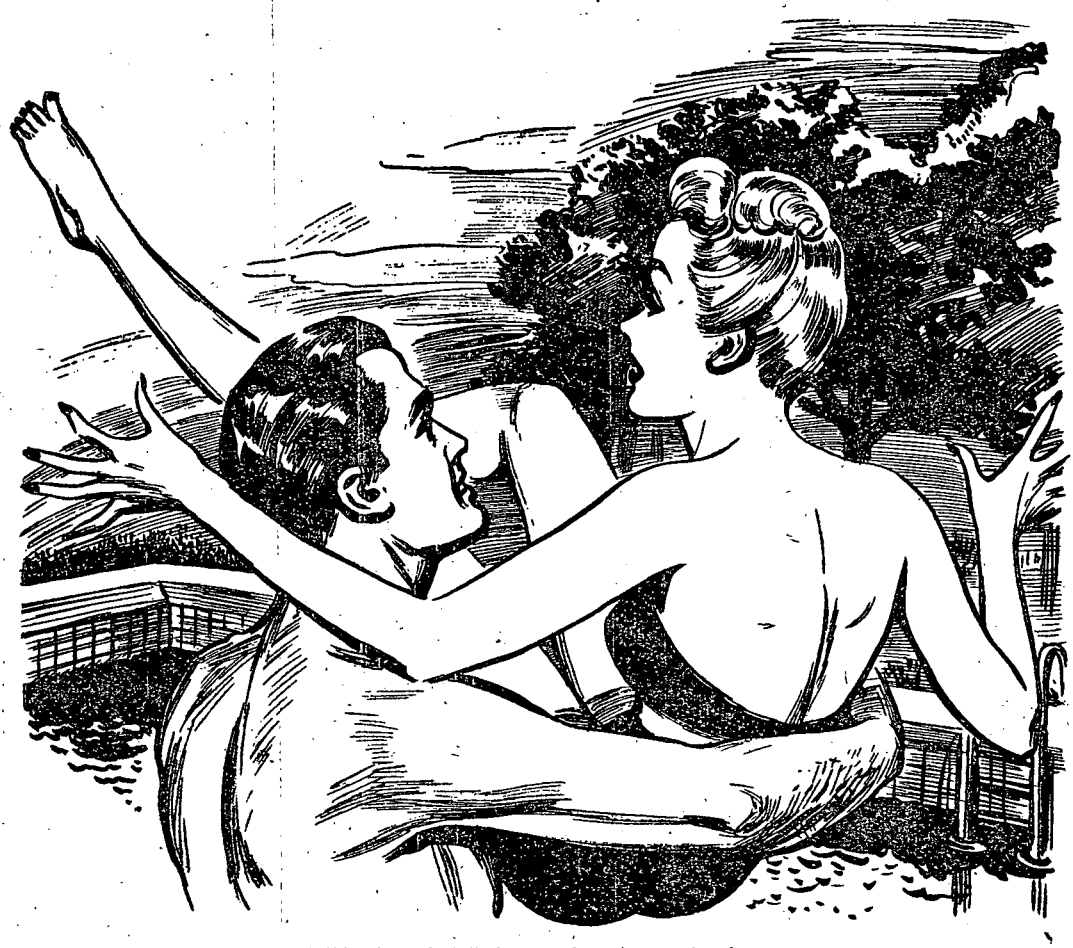

"Oh, please don't," she panted, no longer triumphant

A Figure of Fun

By MAURINE GEE

The Lieutenant caught Marcy off the love beam and getting her on it again required some clever romantic tactics!

DARIA DAKIN, the slick chick carrying the lettuce and the two boxes of berries, tried to crash the checking counter. She dashed past the serve-yourself sign and smiled at Marcy, ready with a glib emergency gag. Her military escort reached out and pulled her back.

"Happens there's a line," he said pleasantly.

Marcy pretended she hadn't noticed and went ahead weighing fruits and vegetables. Each time she rang up a total, she let her

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glance wander briefly over the head of the lieutenant with Miss Dakin. He was Army, he was a pilot and his service ribbons had that casual look. He was rugged and durable looking and a silly thought crossed Marcy's mind. She did wish she were Queen of the May or something so he could see that she wasn't just a part of the cash register.

Gus, manager of the market, came up back of her.

"I'll take over," he said. "You go out back and hustle up a fresh batch of corn."

Corn is right, Marcy thought, as she turned and walked off. Now she would never know if one of the ribbons the lieutenant wore stood for an American Defense Medal or the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations.

The storage room was a mess. From the out-going crates, the smell of rotted celery and cabbage cuttings rose repellent and insistent. Marcy caught up a villainous looking knife and began whacking off the fore and aft ends from fresh ears of corn.

"Hi, Marcy."

She glanced up and saw Daria Dakin in the doorway, backed by the lieutenant. Daria glanced up at the big sign, Employees Only, and walked right in. Marcy liked her, she was one of the smartest dressed girls who came in the market and Marcy often saved hard-to-get bananas and frozen berries for her. Now Daria eyed Marcy as though she were a succulent bit of verdure, destined for the evening feast.

"I had a girl all lined up to be my model tomorrow," she said, "but she ran off to Las Vegas to marry her soldier and left me flat."

She backed up to Marcy and felt their head levels to see how they measured for height.

"You can wear my clothes, all right. Look, Marcy, how'd you like to ditch this job and work for me for a while? If I blow up, Gus will always take you back."

MARCY was cautious. Six weeks working on this garbage detail had left her feeling pretty certain that something had better turn up soon, but she wasn't jumping with her eyes shut.

"Doing what?"

"I'm a style expert, Marcy. I sell women on the idea that each can be an Esther Williams if she only gets the right foundation garment. Once the blubber is under control, the rest is only a matter of judicious make-up, hair-do and expensive garments. I recommend certain shops and get a rake-off from them." She smiled engagingly. "You'd be my model, my assistant."

"Stooge is the word," said the lieutenant.

Daria laughed at his little pleasantry and turned to introduce him to Marcy.

"I'm sorry, darling, to neglect you. Miss—er—"

She glanced at Marcy, not knowing her last name.

"Styles," said Marcy, and she saw that it was the Asiatic-Pacific Theater ribbon that the lieutenant wore.

"Miss Styles, may I introduce Lieutenant Hibbard?"

He nodded, with a faint smile, from under his black lashes.

"Do you have a guy in the Pacific area?" he asked bluntly.

Marcy regarded him with tolerance, suspecting a rib.

"Why?"

"Because he's going nuts when you write him you're modelling mink coats. Those guys think too much."

"Don't be silly, Hunt. She'll wear nothing but a simple dark suit," Daria said quickly.

The lieutenant's gaze never wavered from Marcy. He was looking at her, as from across a distance.

"Don't let Daria kid you," he advised. "She started out in those simple things, but now it's mink or nothing. Don't be a piker. Never stop short of mink."

Marcy knew he wasn't talking to her, he was talking around her to give Daria a dig, but suddenly she didn't like him anymore. She glanced down at her vegetable-stained hands, her water-soaked shoes.

"I know all this looks glamorous to an outsider," she said, indicating the untidy room with a sweep of her hand. "But there are times when I can't look a tossed salad in the face."

The lieutenant had the grace to look thoughtful and Daria, the golden girl, laughed.

"Atta girl, Marcy. He's just a figure of fun, always joking."

Marcy eyed the lieutenant with distaste. Here she was lopping off corn, watching for Gus out of the corner of her eyes. Here was Daria Dakin getting eloquent over some crazy business plan and here was this lieutenant looking grave and disapproving. His disapproval annoyed her. He had never seen her in decent clothes. He had never

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seen her before in his life and yet he was sure anything she did would be wrong.

Marcy glanced at the man's size wrist watch which her brother had passed on to her when he joined the Navy.

"I'll be out of this in an hour," she said. She loaded the lug of corn on the truck and headed for the door. "I can talk to you then."

"We'll wait in the car," said Daria eagerly, and she thrust her arm through the lieutenant's and hurried him along with her.

MARCY spent the next hour leading a double life. Half her mind was checking out customers, chopping off the tops of carrots, turnips and beets while she explained to the customers that they'd have to return the box on account of the paper bag shortage and no extra boxes. And all the while she was burning first hot and then cold on the Daria Dakin deal. The thought of getting up in front of a bunch of women gave her that quick-freeze feeling. Still, any job was better than herding a flock of vegetables, no matter what Lieutenant Hibbard thought about it.

When she went out to Daria's car, she had changed to her dark blue dress with the white pique collar. Her white pique hat was worn far back and her neat blue pumps felt snug and wonderful after those sloppy saddle oxfords.

Daria smiled approvingly at sight of her and even the lieutenant risked a second look. Daria moved over in the seat and Marcy got in beside her.

"You've heard of Helen Hibbard Ayers?" asked Daria.

"Afraid not," said Marcy.

"She lectures on books and current events all up and down the West Coast," Daria told her. "Women's Clubs, hotel groups and such. When she's finished a lecture, she lets me take over for a few minutes and I ask for a volunteer from the audience to show how readily I can improve her by expert make-up and so on, and that's where *you* come in. You walk up on the platform and . . ."

"No dice," interrupted Marcy. "When I get up in front of people, my throat goes dry and my mind goes blank."

"So what?" said Daria. "It's just the body I need."

"Never let Aunt Helly know she's news to you," the lieutenant warned Marcy.

"He means Helen Hibbard Ayers," said Daria. "She's his aunt."

"Do I have to be nice to her, too?"

"It might help," said Daria. "We just phoned her. We're all having dinner with her tonight."

The lieutenant's Aunt Helly lived in one of the canyons that opens up from the coast highway above Santa Monica. A real estate promoter had put in a swimming pool, tennis courts and a children's playground and closed the canyon entrance with a staunch gate that carried the sign: Private Property —No Tresspassing.

The houses were perched at various levels in a sort of amphitheater effect, hidden behind tangled growth of plumbago, cypress, eucalyptus and pittosporum, anything to give a secluded look. Here, just twenty-odd minutes from the heart of Los Angeles, the frayed business man retired to his rustic retreat to breathe the woodsy air of Sycamore Canyon.

AFTERWARD, Marcy always said that whatever effort she made to be friendly with Hunt Hibbard, was inspired by her crush on Aunt Helly. Aunt Helly was the regal type, white hair, blue eyes, a warm smile and a voice that made you realize that correctly spoken, the English language is a thing of beauty. Hunt had made his home with her, on and off, for years and she treated him with the devotion of a mother.

"Dinner ready?" he asked, the moment they were in the house.

Mrs. Ayers shook her head.

"Cook had no more idea of time than a ten-cent alarm clock," she said. "Now don't go out there complaining," she added, as Hunt made a move to leave them. "I insisted she use the new pressure cooker and she'd welcome any excuse to put it back on the shelf for good."

"Time for a swim?" he asked. "Come on, Helly, let's all take a quickie before dinner."

"You children run along," she agreed. "I'd go, but I'm expecting a long distance call."

Hunt threw back his head and laughed.

"Why, honey, you've been expecting that call for years. How about you Daria?"

She shook her head.

"I hate getting frozen and messy."

He glanced at Marcy as though he presumed there was no point in asking her.

"Is there an extra suit around?" she asked.

Mrs. Ayers nodded, pleased that Macry was going to swim with her darling.

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"Daria, take her to the guest room. There are two or three of those elastic confections hanging in the cedar closet. And you'll find a rubber cap in the shower."

Daria took Marcy in hand. She fitted her out in the sloppiest of the bathing suits and sent her off with a final warning.

"Don't get your hair wet. Remember I've got to make a glamour puss out of you tomorrow."

And even as Marcy went down the front steps with Hunt, she heard Daria explaining to Mrs. Ayers in a tragic voice how she'd lost her really good model to the Army and would have to sweat it out with this new girl. Hunt glanced swiftly at Marcy, but she pretended she hadn't heard.

THE pool was one of those dream places with a diving board, cement benches on the side lines and a backing of sycamore trees that peered into the water to get a last glimpse of themselves before the darkness closed in. And no people. No customers. No one but Hunt who seemed to have left his grouch back at the house with his clothes.

He strode straight to the spring board and dived in head first, without benefit of nose holding. A nice clean performance. Marcy edged into the water and found it all icy needles. She swam quickly to the far end of the pool and clung there a moment to get her breath.

She had started back when Hunt came up opposite her, the water gleaming sleekly on his plastered down hair.

"Wish I had a fish to toss you," she laughed.

He rolled over in a somersault and came up blowing the water from his mouth and nostrils, flapping his hands together like a trained seal. Marcy pretended to toss him a fish and he leaped high to catch it and went under again. This time he tossed back his hair as he broke surface and said something to her.

She tread water and lifted the rubber cap off one ear.

"What?"

He slid through the water to her.

"Shall I turn on the flood lights?"

"And ruin our beautiful swim?"

He smiled and the odd arch of his eyebrows accentuated the warmth in his eyes. Marcy had the feeling that he was happy for the first time since they'd met. They raced down to the end of the pool together.

"Come on and try the board," he suggested.

Marcy shook her head.

"Can't, have to keep my darned hair dry for tomorrow."

Her face sobered as he caught hold of the tile edging beside her.

"Sure you want to go through with that public appearance stuff?"

"Summer school starts at the university next week," said Marcy. "I'll work for Daria mornings and get in an afternoon class or two."

"Why not get one of those jobs living with a family near the university and staying nights with the small fry?"

"Have you ever tried living your own life around a bunch of young twirps?"

"Sounds good."

Marcy pulled herself up over the side and went to get her towel.

Hunt trailed after her.

"There were ten of us at home," she said, tossing him a towel. "Just think of me as a refugee from mass production."

"Okay," he said bitterly. "Stuff your mind with this career stuff and you'll make some guy a nice wife when he gets back. No home to fuss with, no kids to bother him, no family, just a right guy supported by the little woman. That's for me!"

Marcy wiped her face to hide her smile.

"I'd almost believe you, only—"

"Only what?"

"You'd get mad."

"Daria's filled you up on a lot of guk about the way I chase her, huh?"

"She was only trying to explain why she sort of keeps an eye on you."

"Because she wants to use my Aunt Helly to help put across this new program of hers," he said.

"Well, not exactly. She just intimated you'd tie a rock around your neck and jump off the pier if she refused to marry you."

"Darn silly. Why would I want to tow a big rock all the way in shore?"

"I try to see beyond this repulsive front you turn on your public," Marcy assured him. "It's just that it burns you to a crisp to come home and find your girl all tied up with programs and stuff when you want her all to yourself. I know just how you feel."

"Nonsense! Will you kindly get over the idea I'm falling for the first girl I see when I get home?"

Marcy pulled off her cap and fluffed out her hair.

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"Rumor has it you've been chasing her for years."

"Reverse those charges, please."

"Ha! So you really are a stinker."

Marcy gave him a shove. It was wet and slippery underfoot and he went over into the pool, towel, slippers and all. He bobbed up sputtering.

"Wait till I get hold of you," he yelled, reaching for a slipper that bobbed to the surface. "Just wait!"

MARCY turned and fled toward the house. Low sycamore branches slapped at her and the gravel on the path bit into her bare feet. She heard Hunt pounding along behind her. She tried to run faster. It was like one of those nightmares where you race on a treadmill, with some nameless horror just behind you, its breath hot on your neck. Hunt's hand caught the crossed straps of her suit and jerked her to a stop.

Marcy turned on him, the blood pounding in her ears. She was triumphant, enraged and defiant all in the same breath. He caught her up under one arm like a sack of meal and headed back toward the pool. She kicked and tried to make herself heavy, but she only succeeded in tightening his grip until she thought she would never breathe again.

As they passed the cement bench, she caught hold of it with both hands, shrieking and protesting.

"You'll get my hair wet."

"No foolin'. I'm going to drown you."

Marcy clung to the bench with all her strength. Slowly, patiently, Hunt loosened her hold, one hand at a time. He caught her up in both arms and held her out over the water.

He began to count to prolong the agony.

"One for the money."

He swung her far out and then back again.

"Oh, please don't," she panted, no longer defiant, no longer triumphant.

"Two for the show."

He was making it just as though he would. Again he swung her out and back. Marcy clutched him around that hateful brown neck of his in a frenzy of despair. If *she* went in, they *both* went in. He hesitated. He actually let the tips of her toes touch the good earth. Marcy wanted to throttle him but she made herself smile at him, sweet entreaty in her eyes.

"Why, Miss Styles," he teased. "I didn't know you cared."

She shrank from the long, inscrutable look in his dark eyes, but she dared not loosen her hold.

"Is that the best bribe you can offer?" he asked, a smile of triumphant deepening around his mouth.

Suppose someone came up and saw them standing there like two enthralled lovers? Better get this over with. Marcy shut her eyes tightly, pulled his head down and kissed him.

She kissed him fair enough, but he didn't kiss back. She opened her eyes and saw the Adam's apple in his throat move as he looked down his cheek at her. He studied her with alert, inscrutable eyes as he set her down.

"That was the pay-off, now one for fun, eh?"

Marcy could only stare at him unsmiling, with wide, neutral eyes, wondering why she didn't run, now that she had the chance.

He caught her by the elbows and he kissed her, delicately, with a warmth and finesse that left her limp and breathless. They heard a call from the road. It was too dark to see distinctly but they heard Daria's shout.

"Hurry! Hurry! Chow's ready."

"So are we," Hunt sang out.

He released Marcy and silently they got their things and joined Daria. She laughed as they emerged out of the darkness.

"Look at you," she jeered. "Exhausted! And you call that fun."

Hunt caught her by the hand and made her race up the path with him, leaving Marcy to follow. Marcy was glad to escape Daria's prying eyes, but she wished she were home. She wished she didn't have to sit through dinner with these three bright persons.

She wished she'd had sense enough to drown in the pool before she made such a fool of herself with Hunt. He knew that she knew he was practically engaged to Daria and he knew . . . Well, he knew too darned much and Marcy wanted no part of him.

THE DINING room was candle lit, the food was excellent but there were too many guests present: Miss Dakin and Lieutenant Hibbard, to be explicit. Even Aunt Helly lost a certain appeal when she began trying to sell Daria on this rustic spot as an ideal setting for a wedding.

"Be different," Aunt Helly urged Daria. "Go in for organs and a peasant theme. Can't you just see the rose arbor made into an altar?"

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Daria squirmed a little under Aunt Helly's direct questioning. She glanced to Hunt for help, but he watched her, his eyes darkly sardonic.

"We haven't decided anything definite," Daria said.

"No telling where this new promotion stuff will lead, Aunt Helly. I'm holding off to see how Daria gets ahead. I want to take it easy when I get back for keeps. I'd like to be set up in the luxurious style I enjoyed on Iwo Jima and Okinawa," Hunt said with mock seriousness.

Aunt Helly regarded him, curiously bland as he turned to Marcy.

"That's right, isn't it? We expect Daria to do right by us, don't we?"

Marcy refused to meet his eye.

"I'm a stranger here," she said pleasantly. "Could be someone pressed the wrong lever."

"He's always petulant until he gets his coffee," said Daria. "Carry on, darling, we love your little tantrums."

Daria and Hunt drove Marcy home about ten o'clock. She had a tiny apartment over an office building on Westwood Boulevard that she shared with two other girls. Marcy hopped out of the car and said a hurried good night. But Hunt tagged along and started up the stairs with her, a stubborn look on his face.

"Go away," said Marcy in a low voice. "I told you good night."

"When will I see you?"

"You won't."

"Must you make both of us miserable?"

He caught her hand.

She found herself fighting against the same horrible fascination that had trapped her at the pool. The same fascination that beguiled Daria and heaven knew how many other girls.

Full, rich anger flushed her heart.

"Will you do one thing for me?" she asked.

"Certainly."

"Stay away from me!" She freed her hand and moved up a step or two to put distance between them. "Don't even speak to me."

She turned and ran up the stairs, leaving him standing there in the drab, narrow passageway.

Marcy didn't see him again until the following Friday. By that time she had four Daria Dakin programs behind her. She was a veteran, taking stage fright and knee trouble as a matter of course. Friday she had transportation trouble. She missed her bus.

THE Morning Room of the Carlton-Gables Hotel was filled with women intent on the tag end of Helen Hibbard Ayers' lecture. A pin dropped by a careless hand would have caused many a raised eyebrow. Plunging up the stairs to the foyer, only one partition away, came Marcy, hot and bothered after her dash from the bus. She rounded the curve and slowed abruptly as she spotted the lieutenant at the door, eavesdropping on his aunt's lecture.

"Sss," hissed Marcy. "Is Daria on yet?"

He closed the door with maddening deliberation and stared at her.

"Were you speaking to me?"

"Certainly," said Marcy impatiently, busy bedecking herself with the beads, clips and flowers that was a part of her act. "I'm late."

"Aunt Helly still has 'em in hand," he said. "You do look a little rushed. Why not start twenty minutes earlier and arrive all cool and collected?"

"It's plain to see you lead a sheltered life," she said. "It just happens that the City of Los Angeles spreads all over California and I always have to get there by eleven-ten."

"I've watched all four performances," he said. "Your work is improving. That dramatic look you give the audience when Daria snips off that last hunk of flowers from your hat is good."

"It's just pinned on," said Marcy modestly. "Daria uses the scissors for effect."

"The smile?"

"The flowers."

She opened the door a fraction of an inch to see how much time she had left.

"I still think we're gumming up my leave," he said. "We could get chummy and catch our own busses for a change."

"Pardon me, sir, but you're working on the wrong girl. Remember Daria?"

"Daria is just an old friend."

"Not that old," said Marcy as she reached for the doorknob. "Good-by."

"Save it," he urged. "We haven't even started yet."

Marcy tiptoed into the auditorium and sank down in the nearest seat, waiting for her cue to walk timidly up to the platform so Daria could take her apart and put her together again. Today she would slip away the minute Daria was through with her and not wait for a ride. It wasn't fair, of course,

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but somehow she was fed to the teeth with Daria. She was fed up with Daria and Mrs. Ayers and that conceited nephew of hers, Lieutenant Hibbard. As a matter of fact, she was fed up with herself.

When she got home that evening, she found herself snapping at her two roommates. They both drew into their respective shells and Marcy knew she would have to apologize or get out of there. The door buzzer came to life and she sprang to open the door. She was confronted with a close-up of Lieutenant Hibbard, winded but determined.

"She doesn't live here," said Marcy before he could open his mouth.

The door wouldn't close on account of his big foot.

"Get your hat," he said. "I know where two big juicy steaks are hiding."

Marcy felt the hostile silence back of her and somehow, in her present mood, it seemed fitting that she should feast on the cream of the beef while her housemates settled for creamed sauce on tuna.

HUNT DROVE her to Mead's restaurant on Wilshire. There, after a suitable softening up process of waiting in line, they were led to a booth that took them past a table which Miss Daria Dakin shared with a handsome brute in Navy blues.

Hunt seemed surprised and delighted at the unexpected meeting. Anyone would have thought he hadn't seen Daria in weeks. Everyone was introduced, there was an exchange of light pleasantries, with Daria looking like a pup that had been caught chewing the wrong slipper.

Hunt followed Marcy to their booth and took up the menu with an innocent look on his face. An inked line ran through each item on the menu that so much as mentioned beef in any form, but he didn't even apologize.

"That sea food plate looks good," he told Marcy. "What will you have?"

"A helping of brains," sighed Marcy.

The waitress stared and Marcy said that she would settle for the sea food plate. She plastered a smile on her face for Daria's benefit and listened to Hunt's account of taking Aunt Helly to the races that afternoon. There was a wonderful nag in the fourth race who'd made them twenty bucks. Marcy said that was wonderful. He went on to tell her about the thirty bucks they'd lost in the fifth race and Marcy said that was also wonderful.

Nothing he said had any meaning to her. The moment she saw Daria there, she knew for sure that Hunt had brought her here just to show Daria that he wasn't stuck without her. Marcy's pride mounted. She sat there, letting the time tick by until Daria got out of the way.

Hunt certainly thought he had her mesmerized. Look how she'd snapped up the opportunity to come here with him. No date, no nothing. He simply galloped up to the door at the last minute, whistled, and she came running. He probably thought she acted that way with all the men. What men? demanded the unkind voice of conscience. You keep out of this, snapped Marcy. Haven't I enough trouble without hearing from you?

She ate the food that was placed before her and the moment Daria and her escort were safely out of the way, she excused herself.

"Seems a little juvenile," she told Hunt, "trotting out one girl to parade before another. Good night."

"Hey, wait! I've got to get the check."

Marcy spoke briefly to the cashier and got out of there. Across the boulevard a bus was steaming to a stop. Nothing but Marcy's recent experience at catching various busses on the wing could account for her quick action. She darted across the street and threw herself into the open doorway with expert timing.

SHE dropped her coins in the fare box and sat on a hard, upright seat, breathing deeply. Back to manicuring vegetables for her. She didn't ask much of life, just a snack of education and a half-way decent life until some dream man dug himself out of his foxhole and came back to claim her for his own. If you asked her, it was a little 'much' when a man snatched you off to dinner just because he wanted to embarrass his girl friend.

When Marcy got off the buss, Hunt stood there waiting for her. She walked past him as though he were not there.

"Marcy!" He caught her elbow but she straightened her arm in a gesture that was almost a blow.

He thrust his hands deep in his pockets and hurried along beside her.

"Couldn't you slow down to a run?" he suggested plaintively. "I only meant to show you that Daria is nuts about that Navy guy. She's just working me and Aunt Helly for a good thing."

"Stop following me," Marcy panted.

"How can I?" he demanded. "You won't

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stand still."

They were passing a corner drug store and she stared in at the window display. There were lights and people inside and she thought perhaps she'd better stop right here until she got rid of him. She caught a glimpse of her own reflection and saw that her face was flushed and prim looking.

She turned on him but no words came. He was bareheaded, mopping at the inside of his cap with his handkerchief, looking miserable and embarrassed, yet doggedly serious.

"It isn't just Daria," she finally said. "It's your attitude. You're afraid I'll get ahead. You're afraid I'll make something of myself."

He shook his head.

"You got me all wrong. I didn't want you to get ants like Daria with all that struggle between your first fox chubby and the ultimate mink coat."

Marcy stared at him wide-eyed.

"What's wrong with a fur coat?"

"Not a darned thing if you live in the Arctic," he said patiently. "It's that curdled feeling you girls get against the bird in the hand that baffles me. You work your way up through dyed squirrel and beaver and then you want mink."

"You're crazy," said Marcy. "All I want is to say 'good night'."

He regarded her earnestly.

"You're sure?"

"Stand aside, bub, and you'll find out."

"I mean—Look, Marcy, when a man's off in camp somewhere he discovers how little it takes to get along. Essentials. It isn't so bad. I was in school when this thing started and I'll be on my own when it's over. I've saved a little dough, maybe I'll jerk gasoline or try my luck on a hot dog stand or work in my Uncle Ed's store over in Glendale. Whatever it is, I'll get along and I want my wife at home with . . . well, I want her home."

"So you want her home," agreed Marcy. "Is that any reason to make an utter dope of me?"

"Marcy, let's face it. If some other guy were in my fix, I'd say he'd fallen for you that very first day in the market. I'd say he didn't want a girl like Daria to change a single thing about you, not your hair, your dress, and certainly not that nice warm smile. I'd say the guy just wanted you as is, only, of course, he didn't know it. He was sore at Daria and taking it out on you."

"Let's face it," Marcy agreed. "You want me to kick around every time you get sore at someone."

"That's as silly as the one about me jumping off the pier with a rock around my neck," he said crossly. "What gives you the idea I'm bent on suicide?"

Marcy had to smile. She let him slip his arm through hers and they strolled on to the shadows where two figures could merge into one without being too conspicous. Presently they remembered his aunt's car parked back at the bus stop and they started to head that way.

Marcy was not a smoking woman but her lips tasted of cigarettes. It was, she decided, a very pleasant taste.

Why I Love You!

It isn't for your eyes of blue,
Your lips, so like a song—
It isn't for your hair so smooth,
Or that you're tall and strong.

It isn't for your looks at all,
You look so good to me—
But for your heart and soul and mind,
The things I cannot see!

—HELEN ARDSLEY

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Shep calmly asked Gwen whom to star in his new program

Set a Heart to Catch a Heart

By ANN ARDEN

When Gwen Roberts tunes in on romance she gets plenty of static — but the power of her love transforms it to song!

GWEN ROBERTS picked up the small bundle of letters and carried them into her boss' office.

"Afternoon mail just came, Shep," she said.

Shep Chandler looked up from his desk. "Anything interesting?"

"Not much, except for two items. One is a letter from New York, confirming that Joe Holbrook will be arriving some time today."

"I know about that," Shep said. "I was talking to him by phone on Tuesday. What's the other letter?"

"It's from the Brinckerhoff Department Store. They've agreed for you to go ahead and build a half-hour program for them, along the lines you suggested."

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"Swell!" He grinned, a wide, boyish grin. "Now the only job is to make a decision between Portia Grayson and Maggie Ennis, for the spot of singing star. Which of the two do you like, Gwen?"

She looked at him helplessly. Of all the questions in the world, Shep *would* pick that one to ask her!

For months now she had been in love with Shep. Ever since she had come here, to Branchville's one and only radio station, she had been able to think of nothing but her boss.

He was something definitely worth thinking about, Gwen told herself as she stood before his desk now, looking into his laughing, quizzical eyes. They were brown eyes, clear and sharp, and they complemented the brown hair which swept back from his wide forehead in an unruly mass.

Shep kept a brush in his top drawer, and once in a while he would make a feeble attempt to brush that shock of hair into place, when a particularly important business contact was due to arrive. But it never did much good. The hair was like Shep himself—too full of energy to stay in one place for long.

He was regarded as somewhat of a phenomenon in the business life of Branchville. He was still short of thirty, and yet he was already the manager of the station, and had saved up enough money to buy his way into part ownership.

He had joined the organization when the business was in a hopeless financial mess, and in a few short years he had turned it into a paying proposition. Instead of playing nothing but phonograph records all day long, the station now broadcast many regular feature programs, patterned after the network shows from the larger cities.

BUT Gwen hadn't fallen in love with Shep for these reasons. She had fallen in love with him just because he was Shep. And because she would have loved him any place and any time she had met him.

She had kept her secret well-hidden, principally because she felt that he was miles out of her reach, and she didn't want to get hurt. But in the past couple of months, there had been still another motive for keeping her feelings to herself.

For Shep had apparently fallen hook, line and sinker for Branchville's Number One glamour girl, Portia Grayson.

And now, of all things, Shep was sitting there and calmly asking her whether she would pick Portia or her own best friend, Maggie Ennis, to star in the new program!

"I—I don't know, Shep," she faltered. "I suppose it's up to you to decide."

He frowned thoughtfully. "Your friend, Maggie, is a good singer. There's no doubt about that. But Portia is coming along, too. Those lessons she has been taking have done her a lot of good."

Gwen smiled bitterly. Yes, Portia had been taking lessons, spending a young fortune for coaching, something that a girl like Maggie Ennis could never afford. Singing meant earning a living to Maggie. To Portia it was a hobby.

And Gwen was ninety-nine per cent sure that Portia's recently acquired interest in Shep was purely and simply based on the fact that he was the manager of the local radio station. Portia's ambition in life was to become a society radio singer.

Shep rose. "Portia and Maggie are rehearsing in Studio A now. Why don't we drop in and see how they're getting along?"

Gwen nodded. She followed Shep down the carpeted corridor, feasting her eyes on the broad sweep of his shoulders, and the casual way he thrust his hands deep in his pockets when he walked. It was so hard, so desperately hard to be with him every day, and not let him know how she felt about him!

Instead of going into the studio, Shep led the way into the control room. An engineer was seated at the control board, his hands playing over the intricate system of dials with the delicate touch of a surgeon.

Out in the studio, Maggie Ennis was at the microphone. She was singing a rhythm number, while one of the studio pianists accompanied her. Her voice was not being broadcast, of course, for this was only a rehearsal, and only Gwen and Shep and the engineer in the control room could hear her.

Shep waved to Portia, who was sitting next to the pianist, then listened attentively to Maggie. Gwen was delighted to see that he seemed pleased with what he heard. Maggie may not have had the benefit of Portia's training, but she had been a professional singer for several years, and knew how to put a song across.

When she finished, Shep snapped on the talk-back switch so that his voice could be heard in the studio.

"Swell, Maggie," he said. "Sounded great.

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Now let's hear you, Portia. I want to see how you handle that same number."

The society girl rose and walked toward the microphone, her expression one of apprehension.

"I'd rather do a ballad, Shep," she drawled. "I've never been much good on those corny rhythm numbers."

"Well, you've got to learn to be good on them," Shep said. "We can't build musical programs around nothing but ballads." He smiled at her. "Why not try it? Just relax, take it easy. No reason why you can't do it."

Portia shrugged and nodded to the pianist. He gave her an introduction and she began to sing.

Gwen shuddered. She wondered how anyone with Shep's keen judgment could possibly be so misguided as to think this girl could become a first-class singer. The intensive coaching she had received had taught her a certain amount, but her feel for the music was hopelessly lacking. After Maggie's professional interpretation of the number, Portia's rendition seemed horribly flat and lifeless.

Shep realized this. Gwen saw that he knew Portia was not ready for a professional job yet. But he was at least blinded enough with her glamour to think she might learn. That was what worried Gwen.

SHE POURED out her troubles to Maggie a few minutes later when Portia's number was over. She and Shep came into the studio, and Shep went into a huddle with Portia and the pianist. Gwen and Maggie sat down in a corner out of earshot.

"Don't worry about that routine," Gwen said to Maggie in a low voice. "He's bound to realize eventually that you're the gal for the job."

Maggie smiled. "You're telling *me* not to worry, Gwen? You're the one who's burning."

"Don't be silly," Gwen protested. But she flushed.

"You say Shep is blind. I'd be blind too, if I couldn't see how you feel about that good-looking boss of yours. There's no use denying it to me, honey. I know what you're going through. After all, I just stand to lose a job singing on a radio program. You stand to lose the man you love."

Gwen nodded slowly. "You're right," she whispered. "There's no use denying it. It hurts so darned much I can't stand it sometimes." Her voice broke just a trifle. "If she were a nice kid, it wouldn't be so bad. But Portia Grayson!"

"I know," Maggie said.

Gwen stared at Portia, her blood boiling at the cow-eyed way the society girl was gazing at Shep. She was strikingly smart-looking, no getting around that. Her raven black hair was parted in the middle, and drawn severely back to a soft, rolled chignon. Her clear white skin and finely modeled features were set off by a pair of large, beautifully carved jade earrings. And the sleek lines of her black dress showed off her figure to good advantage.

There was plenty of reason why a man like Shep would be blinded by Portia Grayson. But the thing that made it so much harder to take was that Gwen was certain this Portia business was a purely one-sided affair.

Portia knew there was one thing that even her limitless bank account could never buy for her, and that was an opportunity to sing on Shep's station. And this, she knew, would be an essential part of her career, although Gwen was sure that the girl's ambition reached far beyond the limits of Branchville.

"She would drop Shep like a hot potato," Gwen murmured, "the minute he stopped being useful to her."

"You've really got it bad, haven't you?" Maggie said.

"I just hate to see anyone as nice as Shep get hurt," she protested. But she knew she wasn't fooling either Maggie or herself.

The studio door opened, and a powerfully built man in his middle thirties, with prematurely iron-gray hair, came in and looked around hesitantly.

"May I barge in?" he said, "Or does somebody go on the air in ten seconds?"

Shep looked up, and his face broadened into a grin.

"Joe Holbrook!" he said. "Come on in, you goon. I've been looking for you all day."

"Train was late," Joe said. He shook hands with Shep, then noticed Gwen. "Hi, sweet stuff," he called to her.

"Hello, Joe." She smiled.

He left Shep and came over to her. "How about that standing date of ours? Are you free tonight?"

"Well, let's see." She pretended to ponder. "At last count, I had twenty-nine engagements lined up for this evening. But seeing as how you're in town, I'll break them all to be with you."

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"That's the girl," Joe said. "I'll be seeing you as soon as I've settled the affairs of the world with your boss."

"How's about getting started now?" Shep said. He, too, had drifted over, and Gwen thought she detected a peculiar interest in his eye as he looked at her.

"Fair enough," Joe said. "Five-thirty, Gwen?"

"It's a date."

The two men disappeared in the direction of Shep's office. Portia Grayson stared after them, obviously annoyed that matters of business could drag Shep away from her. She glared at Maggie, decided that Gwen wasn't even worth a nod, and stalked out of the studio.

BUT MAGGIE was looking at Gwen.

"Say, who is this Joe Holbrook, anyhow?" she asked.

Gwen laughed. "Just a good friend of mine. He works for a radio sales agency in New York. You might almost say he's our sales representative there, although he represents a lot of other small town stations too. If a big advertiser in New York wants to buy time on this station, he simply contacts Joe's office and the deal is set right there."

"Very interesting," Maggie said dryly. "But I didn't mean that, and you know it. What I'm interested in is the personal set-up. You and Holbrook. What goes?"

"Nothing goes," Gwen said simply. "He's just a nice fellow, that's all, and we've sort of got into the habit of seeing each other when he comes to town."

Maggie smiled. "You know, Gwen, for a smart girl you know less about what your heart gets into than almost anybody I know."

"My heart! What in the world do you mean?"

"Holbrook, darling. You're as blind on that deal as you are on the Shep problem. Don't tell me you don't realize that Holbrook is in love with you?"

Gwen gasped. "Joe! Oh, Maggie, don't be ridiculous!"

"I've got eyes," Maggie said calmly.

"You've also got an imagination. Joe and I are just friends, that's all."

"But he still makes a bee-line for you the minute he hits town, and insists on dating you up. Ah, me. Innocence is wonderful."

"But Maggie—!"

"Don't worry, darling. Even if I'm right, I know it wouldn't make any difference to you. You're so wrapped up in that boss of yours, you don't even know there's another man in the world." She dropped her voice. "And, confidentially, Gwen, I don't blame you!"

She, too, departed, and Gwen went back to her office, her mind seething. Joe Holbrook in love with her! Why, the very idea was ridiculous. He was never in town more than one or two nights at a time, and he hadn't breathed a word of anything like romance to her, since she had known him.

She tried to shrug the matter off as unimportant. But she had a strange feeling that Maggie might be right.

Thirty minutes later the door to Shep's private office opened, and Shep and Joe came out. Shep had his hat on.

"Time to knock off, Gwen," he said. "You've been working too hard anyway."

"Oh, you're a terrible slave driver." She smiled, trying to appear natural. Darn it, why did the mere sound of Shep's voice throw her all into confusion, so that she had to fight to get control of herself?

"Will I be seeing you tomorrow, Joe?" Shep said.

"I'm afraid not. I'm catching the midnight for the big city."

"Until the next time you're in town, then." But his eyes suddenly lighted. "On second thought, you two are dated up tonight, aren't you?"

"By me, we are," Joe said.

Gwen smiled and nodded.

"Why don't you drop over to the Sapphire Club?" Shep said. "Portia and I will be there in an hour or so. We could make it a foursome."

Gwen tensed. If Shep and Portia were going to be at the Sapphire Club, that was the last spot in the world she wanted to be. It was hard enough just knowing he would be with Portia, without subjecting herself to the heartache of having to watch them together.

"Well," she began, "I was sort of thinking we might go—"

She stopped abruptly. For an idea had occurred to her. An idea so daring she wondered if she would have the nerve to go through with it.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," she told herself sternly. Aloud she said, "On second thought, that sounds like a good idea. We might do it."

"Swell." Shep turned to Joe. "In that case,

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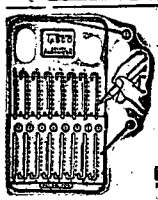

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I won't say good-by. We'll probably see each other later."

"Looks that way," Joe said, and Gwen was puzzled by the tone of his voice. . . .

THE SAPPHIRE Club was already half filled when Gwen and Joe arrived, but Shep and Portia were not there. Joe got a ringside table, and they ordered cocktails.

"We'll hold up the dinner order until they get here," Joe suggested. "Right?"

"I—I guess so," Gwen said, her nervousness growing.

She was eager and at the same time terrified at the thought of how this little plan of hers would work out. If her guess was right, that Portia was pretending to love Shep only because he could give her the start she needed in her singing career, then the results could prove most interesting. If she turned out to be wrong, and saw that it was really Shep himself that the society girl was interested in, maybe it would be different.

But she preferred not to even think about such a possibility!

As the time passed, she began to wonder if they were coming at all. Perhaps Shep had mentioned his invitation, and Portia had balked at the idea.

"There they are now," Joe said, and waved until he caught Shep's attention.

There was envy in Gwen's eyes as she watched Portia Grayson come toward them, picking her way through the maze of tables and chairs. The vivid green and black print she was wearing, was causing everyone in the room to look at her.

But Gwen didn't feel guilty because of her envy. What girl wouldn't like to be able to afford the fine clothes that Portia always wore? And it was such a simple procedure with Portia. Her father had only to write a check, and the most expensive creations were at her command. No wonder Shep was dazzled. No wonder his usually sound judgment had been shaken by the double-barreled attack that Portia was throwing at him.

Gwen liked to remember that, just now. It gave her courage to carry through the experiment she was planning.

"Greetings," Shep said as he and Portia reached the table. "Fancy meeting you here, and all that sort of business."

"So *this* is the surprise," Portia said, and one look was enough to convince Gwen that

(Continued on page 90)

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To introduce yourself, write to me—addressing your letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Elder, care of THRILLING LOVE, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. Write your letter in such a way that others will be eager to know more about you. Be sure to sign your full name and address for our files.

Give me a nickname under which you want your letters to be published. It will be only under this name that other readers will know you. They will write to you in my care—and I will forward their letters.

No letter will be forwarded unless a stamped envelope is enclosed. *Women and girls may write only to women and girls, and men only to men.* After the first letters, direct correspondence between you and your new friends will have been established.

IMPORTANT: In writing to me, or in requesting me to forward your letter, do not neglect to give the following particulars: Your name, address, age, sex. Supply at least one reference.

In asking that letters be forwarded clearly print the number assigned to your chosen friend on the stamped envelope which you enclose. All letters should be written neatly in ink. Do not seal the letter that you wish forwarded. If any unwelcome letters should be received by readers, I would appreciate your forwarding them to this department.

Elizabeth Elder

EAGER TO HEAR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would like to join the Friendly Set. I have blue eyes and blond hair. My hobbies are roller skating and going to the movies. I am 18. I am eager to hear from someone. So please start writing this way.

FANNIE No. 6319

WRITES POETRY

Dear Mrs. Elder: I'm a 24 year old girl from the "Show-Me" State. I want letters from girls 20 to 30 years from all over. I have dark hair and eyes. I like swimming, dancing, collecting picture post cards and horseback riding. Also I like to write poems. I collect cuttings of odd plants and try to root them. I will answer all letters I receive. Will exchange photos.

MARY No. 6320

SIT DOWN AND WRITE!

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young married girl of 17. I am 5 feet 5½ inches tall and weigh 121 pounds. I have blonde hair and blue eyes. I like all sports but I like to swim best of all. I have quite a bit of spare time, so will some of you girls sit down and write to me, please.

DODY No. 6321

"OODLES OF HOBBIES"

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 15 years old, 5 feet 6 inches tall, weigh 118 pounds, have light brown hair and grey eyes. I have just "oodles of hobbies" from horseback riding to writing to movie stars. I have around 265 autographed photos of famous stars. I would like to hear from girls everywhere regardless of ages. I promise to answer all letters that I receive.

JACKIE No. 6322

LIKES SPORTS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I'm a lonely girl of 16, dirty blonde hair, blue eyes, 5 feet 5 inches tall and weigh 123 pounds. My hobbies are writing and receiving letters, collecting salt and pepper shakers, and picture post cards. I like dancing, bowling and all outdoor sports. So come on, girls, drop me a line.

INA No. 6323

SMALL TOWN GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 13 years, 5 feet 5½ inches tall and weigh 105 pounds. I have blond hair and blue eyes. I love to receive and answer letters. Other hobbies are hiking, dancing, bicycle riding and going to the movies. I live in a small town. I will answer any letters from anywhere as promptly as I receive them.

GEORGIA No. 6324

ANYONE, ANYWHERE, ANY AGE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 14½ years old, have brown hair and blue eyes. I am 5 feet 3 inches and weigh 132 pounds. My hobbies are going to movies, horseback riding, collecting perfume bottles, and snapshots. I like dancing and most sports. I would like to hear from anyone, anywhere, and any age, so come on, pen pals.

ELLEN No. 6325

GIRLS OF ALL AGES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14. I have light brown hair and hazel eyes. I am 5 feet 3½ inches tall. I like all sorts of sports, but best of all I like to dance, roller skate and sing. There is only one girl my age that lives near me and sometimes it gets lonely. I would be very glad to exchange letters and photos with anyone.

LEATRICE No. 6326

LIKES MUSIC

Dear Mrs. Elder: I'm lonesome. I like all sports. I'm a girl of 15 years of age. I am 5 feet 4 inches tall. I like all kinds of music. Also, I like poetry. I promise to answer all letters I receive. I'll also exchange photos.

EMILY No. 6327

MANY PASTIMES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 18, medium brown hair and blue eyes, 4 feet 11 inches and weigh 95 pounds. I am a junior in school. My hobbies are reading, collecting stamps and pen pals. My pastimes are many. So come on girls from 16 to 23 drop a few lines to a lonely girl from the State of New York. Each letter I receive I will answer immediately.

LILLIAN No. 6328

GIRLS FROM FOREIGN LANDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl, 16 years of age, light brown hair, brown eyes, and am 5 feet 6 inches tall.

(Turn to page 82)

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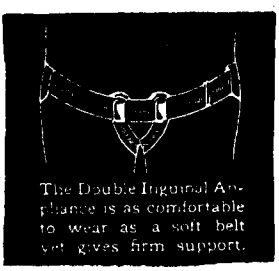

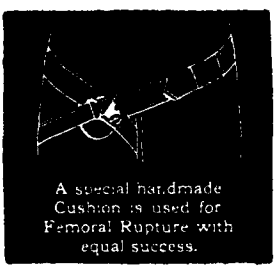

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I am a junior in high school. I play the piano; I love music, sports, dancing and writing letters. I am interested in writing to girls who live in countries, other than the United States. So come on girls around my age, write me a long letter. I promise to answer all letters. Girls, I'm waiting.

M. M. No. 6329

MORE ABOUT HORSES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 14 years old with dark complexion. I have black hair and black eyes. I am very interested in horses and want to learn more about them. So any of you pen pals drop me a line or two.

BILL No. 6330

PLEASE WRITE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 12 years old and would like to hear from girls 12 to 15 years of age. I have brown hair and grey eyes and am 5 feet 2 inches tall. My hobbies are riding bikes and singing. I will answer all letters, please write.

RUTH No. 6331

COME ONE, COME ALL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 15 years old and a sophomore in high school. I have long brown hair and brown eyes. I weigh 110 pounds and am 5 feet 4 inches tall. I like reading books. I also love to go see movies and I go to every one I possibly can. I promise to answer all letters received and love to exchange snapshots. So come one, come all.

PEG No. 6332

HAS MANY INTERESTS

Dear Mrs. Elder: Writing letters is only one of the many things which interest me. There are so many others, in addition to my duties as a homemaker and mother of two boisterous but lovely young daughters, that I am always complaining there just aren't enough hours in the day. I love reading and music and like very much to dance and sing. I do crocheting and other handiwork. I am 29 years of age. I do hope I will find many new friends.

SYDELLE No. 6333

COME FROM CYPRUS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl from Cyprus and I am interested in America and Americans. I have dark hair, brown eyes and I am 5 feet 1 inch tall. I am 19 years old. I am interested in sports, gymnastics, music, singing, dancing, reading, biking and film stars. I would enjoy hearing from girls between ages 16 and 19. I want to have real pen pals.

H. H. No. 6334

YOUNG MARRIED GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young married woman of 22, with dark brown hair and eyes. I am 4 feet 11 inches tall and weigh 110 pounds. I live in a small town in the woods of Maine, and it's very lonesome, especially since my husband went overseas. I am of French descent. I like all sports. I promise an answer to every letter I receive.

MRS. C. No. 6335

SPORT FAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 13 years old. I am a blonde, 5 feet 5 inches tall. I will answer every letter I get. My hobbies are collecting snapshots and I like movies and I love to sing and dance. I want to hear from girls 13 to 17. I like all kinds of sports.

CAROLYN SUE No. 6336

OKLAHOMA BOY

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am an Oklahoma boy. I am 5 feet 9 inches tall, 16 years old, weigh about 158, have brown hair and green eyes. I am away from home and I promise immediate answers. So come on all you boys and drop me a line.

BILLY No. 6337

ROY ROGERS FAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 5 feet 2 inches tall and have long dark brown hair and brown eyes. I collect movie star pictures. Roy Rogers is my favorite. I would enjoy people writing me. I like to dance too, come on pen pals and write me, please.

EVELYN No. 6338

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PLAYS BADMINTON

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14, brown hair, brown eyes and I am 5 feet 3 inches tall. I like all sports especially Badminton. My father is in the army, which makes me very proud of him, I live in a small town and I am very lonesome. So, come on girls, please write to me.

EARNIE No. 6339

NO MAIL

Dear Mrs. Elder: Everyday I patiently wait for the postman and what usually happens? No mail. So couldn't you gals all over these states take time out and write to me? I'm an old married lady of 31, have a small fry of six years. We both roller skate and go to the beach every sunny day. Will answer all letters.

MRS. H. C. No. 6340

15 YEAR-OLDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 15 and in high school. I love to swim and collect movie stars' pictures. I weigh about 185 pounds and I am about 5 feet 4 inches tall. I promise to answer all letters which I receive. I also dance and ride bicycle. I want to write only to girls of my own age.

MILDRED No. 6341

LOVE TO WRITE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I rather get lots of mail than eat when I'm hungry. They make me forget my past and look forward for a better future. I am 20 years old. I'm a girl who would like to exchange letters with lots of people. I like to receive pictures and picture post cards and souvenirs. I have brown eyes and brunette hair.

MYRTLE No. 6342

FARM GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a farm girl of 17. With blond hair, light brown eyes and 5 feet 5½ inches in height. My hobbies are collecting photos from all youngsters. Also, I like horseback riding and all outdoor sports. I would like to hear from some girls of my own age.

KATE No. 6343

HOBBIES ARE MANY

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 13, having brown hair and brown eyes. I am 5 feet 1 inch high. My hobbies are skating, bike riding, and many many others. I love to hear from pen pals from all over the states. I enjoy exchanging picture cards. Come on penpals give a Louisiana girl a chance. Please write! I will answer all letters.

HELEN No. 6344

COME ON, WRITE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 16. I have brown eyes, dark brown hair, am 5 feet 5 inches tall and weigh 110 pounds. I play the guitar and sing. I love to write and receive letters. I would like to hear from girls from 14 to 20. So come on, fill up my mail box immediately.

JUANITA No. 6345

DON'T TURN ME DOWN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 13 and I would love to hear from other girls all over the country. I have blue eyes and brown hair and weigh 104 pounds. My hobbies are swimming and singing. Don't turn me down, please write!

CLARA No. 6346

WILL EXCHANGE HANKIES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I like pen pals, and like to receive letters and will exchange hankies with any one who wishes to do so. I'm a teacher, and have been since 1912. I'm past 50 years of age, fair, blue eyes, medium brown hair, 5 feet 2½ inches tall. I'd like to correspond with anyone who wishes to write.

CORA No. 6347

LOVER OF SPORTS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would like to have pen pals from all over the country. I am a 17 year old blonde girl with blue eyes. I stand 5 feet 9 inches in stocking feet. My hobbies are collecting letters and snapshots. I am a great lover of sports such as dancing, skating,

[*Turn page*]

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swimming, and horse back riding. So come on pen pals drop me a line.

LOU No. 6348

LOOKING FOR A TWIN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would like to find my twin. I am 12 years old and was born November 20, 1933. I am 5 feet 2 inches tall. I have brown hair, blue eyes and weigh 100 pounds. I like all music.

IDA No. 6349

NEW FRIENDS WANTED

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am very interested in meeting new friends. I am a 15 year old girl. I have long curly brown hair, and brown eyes, I am 5 feet 3½ inches tall and weigh 125 pounds. I have a medium complexion. I am a tenth grader. I like a few sports such as, tennis, swimming and baseball. I like to dance and sing. I hope that there are a few girls around my age that would like to write to me.

LOLA No. 6350

WILL ANSWER PROMPTLY

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 13 years old with brown eyes and blonde hair. I like to collect snapshots of pen pals that I write to. I like dancing also and am just full of fun. So come on, write to me for a prompt answer.

MAE No. 6351

HURRY AND WRITE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl, soon to reach the ripe old age of 15 and have brown hair and eyes. I would like to correspond mostly with older girls. I like to read detective stories, travel and read letters about other cities. As it is impossible for me to do any traveling I would like to exchange post cards with girls from other cities. Please hurry and write.

SYDELLE No. 6352

GET YOUR PEN AND PAPER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 18 years of age. I have green eyes, reddish brown hair, am 5 feet 1½ inches tall and weigh 125 pounds. I would like to hear from all girls my age. I like all sports, dancing and roller skating best. I collect snapshots and will exchange gladly. I promise to answer all letters. Don't let me down, girls, get out your pen and paper.

BETTYE No. 6353

FROM 12 TO 16

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 12. I weigh 100 pounds. I have dark brown hair and eyes. I am 5 feet tall. My hobbies are swimming and dancing. I would like to have lots of pen pals from 12 to 16. So please write.

MARY No. 6354

PLAYS TENNIS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 13, weigh about 94 pounds and am 5 feet tall. I have light brown hair and blue eyes. I love to roller skate and play tennis. I would like to hear from girls from 12 to 14 years of age. I promise to answer all letters and will exchange snapshots.

PAT No. 6355

FRANK SINATRA FAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 16 years old, blonde hair, blue eyes and 5 feet 6 inches tall. I love skating, dancing, and collecting Frank Sinatra records. So come on, girls, and write to a Frank Sinatra fan.

DORRIS No. 6356

ALL AROUND GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 22 years old, 5 feet 7 inches tall. I am working in a state hospital and it is away from all recreations so I pass my time by writing, sewing and listening to cowboy and popular music. I am an all around girl. I can do most anything, and I can write to most anyone.

LILY No. 6357

PIANO PLAYER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14, am 5 feet 5 inches tall, weigh 107 pounds, have dark brown hair and grey eyes. I like skating, swimming, outdoor sports, dancing and singing. My hobby is playing the

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piano. I promise to answer all letters received and exchange photos.

FAYE No. 6358

BLUE EYES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 15, have brown hair, blue eyes and am 5 feet 5 inches tall. I would like to hear from the ages of 15 to 20. I love to write letters. So come on, pen pals, drop me a line.

NITA No. 6359

VETERAN'S WIFE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am 22 years old, have blonde hair, blue eyes and I'm 5 feet 7 inches tall. I'm also a married gal and my husband is a discharged veteran. My hobbies are getting mail from all over the world, saving pictures of movie stars and snapshots of friends and pen pals. Also saving souvenirs from different places. I promise to answer all letters and send a snapshot, too.

ETHEL No. 6360

COLLECTS DOG STATUES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14, brown hair and eyes, weigh 110 pounds, 5 feet 4 inches tall. My hobbies are collecting movie star pictures, post cards and dog statues. I would like very much to have a Chinese pen pal, but I would be sincerely glad to hear from anyone of any nationality between the ages of 13 and 15. Won't some of you nice girls please answer my plea for pen pals? Please don't let me down. I promise a reply to all letters.

JANIE No. 6361

More Letters Next Issue

LISTEN, GIRLS!

(Continued from page 31)

them is working in a different night club until the wee hours of the morning. Rivalry between night clubs, crooked interests trying to horn in on big profits, sweep these two lovers into a net of intrigue and misunderstanding—and the result is a dramatic, intensely effective novelet that will hold you spellbound when you read it next issue.

In HOUSE O' DREAMS, another complete novelet next issue—this one by Mona Farnsworth—we move from the city into the small town of Greensville and there meet Amanda, a little girl who owns a big house which is a dream of perfection. When a young man and his fiancee come along and try to take over the house, a situation develops which will enthrall you. Especially when Cupid holds the mortgage—and wedding bells are in the offing!

Added to these two scintillating novelists, there will be many delightful short stories next issue—as well as a full quota of interesting departments. Be on hand for real reading pleasure—and while waiting for that gala number, girls, please *do* turn to my Charm Column on Page 97 for my personal answers to readers' queries, won't you? Thanks—I knew you would! See you next month.

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

(Continued from page 11)

figuration reveals a strong stress that could develop into a stock market loss for anyone who speculates in theatrical securities on margin.

This aspect is unfavorable for gambling of all types. The vibrations are especially adverse for putting money into an enterprise that depends on public favor, such as sports events and circus sideshows. Stormy weather, or other unforseen conditions, might cause a drop in receipts, wiping out all of the profits and a large portion of the original capital.

Since the Moon-Mars square is the closing aspect of April, the stellar warning is to save your money, and to guard against emotional strain inasmuch as the Moon is in the Sign Taurus which rules wealth, while Mars is in the Sign Leo which rules love. Watch your cash and your romantic impulses so that neither is depleted.

THE NEW MOON ON APRIL 1st, at 11:37 P.M., E.S.T.

At the time of a New Moon, a new minor cycle is started in each horoscope, according to its relationship with the natal Sun Sign. Here is the influence of this celestial phenomenon in your birth chart during the next four weeks.

For ARIES *birthdays—between March 21st and April 20th.* The New Moon occurs in your Sun Sign. This shows that new doors will be opened for you this month. At the same time be careful not to argue with your lifemate or relatives, and above all don't become impatient with an elderly member of your family.

For TAURUS *birthdays—between April 21st and May 20th.* Something that was lost, or hidden, might be found unexpectedly. However, don't take anyone into your confidence so far as your plans about your job are concerned. A secret that you reveal unintentionally might be used to your detriment by an unscrupulous person.

For GEMINI *birthdays—between May 21 and June 20th.* While you are at the home of a friend, you might be introduced to an interesting visitor who inspires and fascinates you. Together you might decide to go on a trip, or join a hobby club for mutual entertainment. All month you might be busy with enjoyable pastimes.

For CANCER *birthdays—between June 21st and July 22nd.* A change in your career might be offered to you, with the special proviso since the New Moon occurs in your Tenth House which rules reputation and professional prestige. Think

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the matter over carefully, to assure yourself that it has future possibilities for success and fame.

For LEO *birthdays—between July 23rd and August 22nd.* A friend or relative who was abroad might return, and among other reasons for rejoicing, may be the thrill that the honored guest was the recipient of one of the nation's most distinguished citations. Also, you might be elected to a post of honor at your church.

For VIRGO *birthdays—between August 23rd and September 22nd.* Watch small amounts so that you need not risk a large sum during the next four weks while the New Moon dominates your Eighth House which rules savings. Also see to it that insurance premiums, taxes, and other financial matters that need attention are taken care of promptly.

For LIBRA *birthdays—between September 23rd and October 22nd.* Public attention might be focused on you from several directions. Some of this interest might be prompted by admiration; some of it for the sake of censure inasmuch as the New Moon is in your Seventh House which rules association with large groups. Let others advise you.

For SCORPIO *birthdays—between October 23rd and November 22nd.* Work, and more work, is the signal of the New Moon in your Sixth House which rules labor. Anything you do well and conscientiously should yield exceptionally worthwhile compensation, or you might be given a post of responsibility. A wonderful chance for promotion is indicated this month.

For SAGITTARIUS *birthdays between November 23rd and December 21st.* Every hour of the day during the next few weeks may have to be scheduled methodically so as to give you time for all the delightful social events to which you are invited. Love should be more enchanting than ever; or you might derive happiness from a child.

For CAPRICORN *birthdays—between December 22nd and January 19th.* Domestic and family obligations may keep you occupied throughout the month. Some may be rather arduous, interfering with your business duties. Settle each problem as it comes up, and put things where they belong, so you needn't have to rectify mistakes.

For AQUARIUS *birthdays—between January 20th and February 18th.* A long-deferred opportunity to take time off for a vacation might be offered during April, but you may have to decline it so as to help start a new advertising campaign, or assist with the production of a new book. The toil may be strenuous, yet interesting.

For PISCES *birthdays—between February 19th and March 20th.* The thoughts of money may dominate your mind most of the month, since

[*Turn page*]

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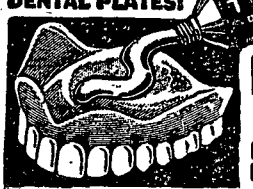
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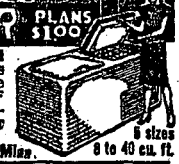

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the New Moon is born this month in your Second House which rules your income. Put away as much cash as you can spare, for future use, otherwise you might spend more than is necessary.

★

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

QUESTION: I wonder what the Stars reveal for a trip for my husband and me. I was born October 30, 1894; he was born April 29, 1891.
MRS. ERNESTINE B.

ANSWER: At the present time the aspects for unnecessary travel are inauspicious, inasmuch as the Planet Uranus is in the Sign Gemini which rules transportation. Even if you are successful in obtaining the proper reservations, there might be unexpected changes that make your journey entirely different from what you anticipated.

Inasmuch as you were born when the Sun was in the Fixed Sign Scorpio, and your husband was born when the Sun was in the Fixed Sign Taurus, you both like to have things turn out exactly as you planned.

Under the circumstances, it would be desirable to postpone your travel plans, if possible.

* * *

QUESTION: I am anxious to open my own business. I was born March 19, 1907. I wonder if this is a good year for me to take the chance.
THOMAS G. F.

ANSWER: At the present time there are a number of aspects formed by the transiting Planets in direct conjunction or square with the vibratory influences in your natal horoscope. These are so powerful that they incline you to be restless, and eager for a change.

Since currently Saturn is in your Fifth House which rules investments, make sure that the capital required to start your own business does not constitute all your savings. Unless you are careful, you might impoverish yourself inasmuch as Saturn is in square aspect with transiting Jupiter in your Eighth House which rules accumulated assets.

Furthermore, Neptune also is in your Eighth House. Therefore, there is a strong tendency toward self-delusion so far as speculation is concerned.

However, timidity can't get you anywhere, so start on a small scale to make sure that you are competent to carry out your wish for economic independence. Whether you go into business for yourself or not, don't deviate from your impressions which usually are accurate, inasmuch as you were born when the Sun was in

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the Water Sign Pisces which rules supersensory perception.

* * *

QUESTION: I was born April 9, 1910. Why have I not been able to find my true marriage affinity so far?

HARRIET T. W.

ANSWER: At the time of your birth the Sun, Moon, Mercury, and Saturn were in the Fire Sign Aries. Neptune was in the Water Sign Cancer. Uranus was in the Earth Sign Capricorn, and Jupiter was in the Air Sign Libra. These aspects formed a grand square in the Cardinal Signs.

Venus was in the Water Sign Pisces, and Mars was in the Air Sign Gemini, in zodiacal square. The entire horoscope shows very powerful vibratory influences. You have the capacity for great emotional expression.

However, inasmuch as Uranus and Saturn were in exact square, there is a stricture in realization of your expectations. What you get, and what you anticipate are usually at wide variance.

There also is an inclination to be self-effacing as the result of the presence of Venus in your Twelfth House which rules inhibitions.

* * *

QUESTION: My husband has never lost his zest for adventure. Why is that? He no longer is a young man. He was born December 11, 1888. At the present time he is in search of a gold mine. I wonder if he will find it.

MRS. AGNES A.

ANSWER: It has often been said of people who were born when the Sun was in the Fire Sign Sagittarius, where it was placed at the time of your husband's birth, "the chase is more fascinating than the hunt."

Your husband likes to pursue anything that is new and untried. He wants to play hide and seek with luck, inasmuch as his natal Sign is ruled by the Planet Jupiter, known as "the Great Benefic." He likes to acquire a large amount of money at one time rather than work for it slowly and methodically.

He can't bear to sit still, waiting for things to happen. What he wants is to start the race, sprint fast, and then let others do the running!

It is possible that your husband will find a placer mine, but don't expect him to keep working at it. He won't be satisfied with only a few grains of the precious metal after hours and hours of labor.

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SET A HEART TO CATCH A HEART

(Continued from page 78)

she was far from pleased at being roped in on a double date.

Gwen thanked her stars that Shep had chosen to keep the news a secret until Gwen was already here. Otherwise, she was pretty sure, the glamour girl would have refused.

But Portia's expression changed when she saw Joe. Gwen's hopes rose.

"We met at the station this afternoon," Joe said, and smiled when Shep introduced him. "Right, Miss Grayson?"

"Yes, quite right," Portia said slowly, her eyes never leaving Joe's face. Then she said, "You're—a radio man from New York, aren't you?"

"Yep. But don't hold that against me."

"Don't worry," Portia drawled. "I wouldn't hold that against anybody."

They gave their dinner orders, but Portia seemed hardly able to wait until this was done.

"Tell me, Joe, do you have a lot of contacts in New York?" she asked as soon as the waiter left. "I mean, in the radio field?"

"Sure," Joe said, mystified. "That's my business."

"You know a lot of radio station owners?"

"Of course. Why?"

"Just wondering," Portia said, her voice fraught with meaning.

With that, she proceeded to turn all of her glamour on Joe, and to ignore Shep completely!

Before the first course had arrived, she was dancing with Joe, while Shep, somewhat bewildered, asked Gwen to dance. When the four of them returned to the table, Joe shot an inquiring glance at Gwen, but she ignored it. She was almost sure, now, but she had to be completely sure.

By the time the meal was through, she was positive she had figured it correctly. As far as Portia was concerned, Shep simply wasn't in the party at all. She danced with him occasionally, of course, and threw him a vague smile now and then, so that her play for Joe wouldn't be too obvious. But it was obvious enough anyway. And there was no one at the table who didn't realize it.

WHEN the waiter cleared the table and brought after-dinner coffee, Gwen finally heeded Joe's frantic signals, and followed him on to the crowded floor.

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"What the devil is this all about?" he demanded, when they were swallowed up in the swaying mass of dancers.

Gwen smiled. "Are you really a friend of mine, Joe?"

"Sure. You know that."

"Well, I hope you are. Because if you don't like me enough to be awful patient with me, you're going to get sore as a goat in about two seconds."

Joe grinned. "Sounds like you've been hatching a plot. I promise not to get sore. What's it all about?"

"Well—I've got to tell you something, and if you ever betray me, I'll murder you."

"You mean, that you're in love with Shep?"

Gwen stared at him. "How did you know?"

He laughed. "Ask me a tough one. It's written all over you, that's how I knew."

"Good grief!" Gwen muttered. "You're the second person who has said that today."

"Go on with this fiendish scheme you've cooked up. I'm all ears."

Gwen sighed. "Now that you know my horrible secret, maybe you'll understand better. Yes,—I love the goof. He doesn't know I'm alive, and probably never will. But I love him. And even if he never noticed me, I still couldn't stand by without doing

[*Turn page*]

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anything, and watch him break his heart on a piece of tinsel like Portia Grayson."

"A-h-h-h!" Joe said. "Now I'm beginning to see it. Shep is sold on Grayson. Is that it?"

"He thinks he is, which is just as bad."

"What about her?"

"That's where my experiment comes in. I've never believed Portia really gave a darn about Shep. I always thought her interest in him was purely because he owns part of a radio station, and she wants to become a radio singer. That's what I wanted to find out, which is why I was delighted when Shep suggested that the four of us get together tonight."

"I'm the guinea pig, in other words."

"Exactly. I knew that if my theory was right, Portia would throw herself at you. In her eyes, you would be the big New York radio executive who could do a lot more for her than Shep."

"Well, you certainly called the shots right. Of all the grasping, obvious females I ever met, she's tops."

"You don't blame me, do you, Joe?" Gwen said earnestly. "I know he's riding for a fall with Portia, and I just like the guy too much to see him break his heart."

"I don't blame you," he said gently. "I blame him, though, for even looking at a girl like that, when a girl like you is right in the same office with him."

Gwen flushed.

"What do you want me to do from here on?" Joe asked. "Play up to her, and let her hang herself with her own rope?"

"Would you mind very much?"

"I should say not. Nothing would make me happier than to see that girl ride for a fall. And unless I miss my guess, that's exactly what she's doing. I don't think Shep is much pleased with what's been going on."

Gwen knew that he was right. And her heart soared as she watched Shep grow more angry as the evening passed. She still wasn't daring to hope that Shep might transfer his affections from Portia to her. But at least he had begun to see just what sort of a game Portia was playing. And that in itself was a long stride forward.

Now that she saw her cards falling right, Gwen wondered what would have happened if she had been wrong—if Portia hadn't paid any attention to Joe, even knowing his posi-

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tion in the radio world. Gwen trembled to think of it. For she knew that if that had happened, she would have had to concede that Portia was really in love with Shep, and she would never have felt right about trying to interfere.

But now it was different.

Joe and Shep had a brief, heated discussion in front of the club when they left, shortly after eleven. Then Joe called a taxi, to take Gwen home and continue on to the railroad terminal so he could catch his train North.

"I've got a strong hunch," he said, "that you boy friend will keep his eyes open from now on."

But beyond that, he failed to discuss the matter further. And when he left Gwen at her home, she was still puzzled at what he meant.

NONE of this couldn't stop her from dreaming deliciously happy dreams all night long, though. Now, at last, Shep had been shown just what Portia was up to. And maybe he had been waked up before he had fallen enough in love with her to be badly hurt. If any more time had passed, however, and he had had more chances to build his castles-in-the-air around Portia, then he would really have suffered.

Gwen knew. For she was in exactly that position herself.

And she couldn't stand the thought of Shep going through the helpless torture that was hers every time she looked at him.

She reached the radio station early the next morning, and set to work happily. She wondered if Shep would comment on the preceding evening's activities. Probably not. He had never been very communicative anyway, and it was natural that he might not want to talk about it.

She was typing some letters he had given her the day before, and was so intent on her work that she didn't hear him come in. He hadn't been there the last time she looked, and then all of a sudden he was there, standing by her desk.

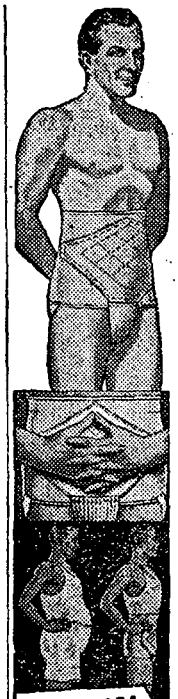
"Oh!" she said. "You startled me."

"I don't doubt it," Shep said.

She looked up and saw that the lines of his face were hard.

"After the stunt you pulled last night," he said, "I don't wonder you feel nervous this morning."

[Turn page]



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She tried to think of an answer and couldn't. But while the harshness of his voice was still sinking in, she heard something which was even more surprising.

"You might like to know," he went on, "that I've decided to give the starring spot in the new Brinckerhoff show to your friend, Maggie Ennis. But in case you're interested, I made that decision yesterday afternoon—even before the date last night. So you see, your little stunt was really not necessary after all."

Gwen gasped. "Shep! What are you talking about? What's Maggie got to do with our date last night?"

There was no humor in his thin smile. "You're pretty innocent, aren't you, Gwen? Well, you can stop acting. It just happens that Joe admitted you had planned for that foursome last night to work out just as it did. You planned to join us because you knew that Portia would make a fool of herself."

"But you invited us to join you, Shep! It was *your* invitation!"

"I'm not sore because you joined us. I'm sore because of your reason. You were going to refuse at first, then you thought of that brilliant idea to show Portia up in front of me, and you accepted. Joe admitted it, Gwen. There's no use denying it."

Gwen was near tears. "But even if that's true, where does Maggie come in?"

"Isn't it fairly obvious?" he mocked. "What reason could you possibly have for wanting to queer Portia with me, unless it was because you wanted your best friend to get the lead spot on the radio show we're building?"

Gwen couldn't answer. Her mind was reeling. This was all wrong! Something, somewhere along the line, had gone horribly astray.

"Would you mind telling me," she finally managed, "just what Joe *did* say last night?"

"Sure, I'll tell you. He said I was a dope for running around with a girl like Portia. He told me she was just playing me for a sucker, and advised me to get wise to myself. And he admitted, when I asked him, that you were the one who had egged him on to play up to Portia, so that I would be made to understand that."

"He—didn't tell you why?" Her voice was barely above a whisper.

"He didn't have to. The answer was pretty clear." Shep paused. "Anyway, your friend has the job. Not because of last night, but because she's a better singer than Portia,

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and I realized it yesterday. So you've done what you wanted to do—even if your methods were slightly unethical."

And he strode out of the office, leaving her alone and sick with disappointment.

She wanted to run away. She wanted to walk out of the station and never come back. So *that* was why he thought she had done it! For Maggie's sake!

Part of her anger was directed against Joe. He had no right to tell Shep anything like that! But if he was determined to tell him at all, why should he have stopped just at the point where the whole episode could be so hopelessly misunderstood?

AND YET, in a way, she understood why Joe had done it. He had sat there for a whole evening, watching Portia make a fool of a good friend of his. In his blundering way, he thought he was doing Shep a favor by talking as he had.

But it had been a mistake—a terrible mistake.

Somehow Gwen stayed at her desk. She didn't leave. She plodded through the correspondence Shep had given her, her fingers pounding the typewriter mechanically. Time after time her eyes became blurred with tears, and she fought to hold them down.

Her heart screamed out in protest against what Joe had done. She wished she had never seen him. She wished she had just gone home alone the night before, and that nothing had even been said about a double date, or joining Shep and Portia.

Shep came back into the office later, and closed his door. He kept it closed all day, and didn't buzz for Gwen once.

The day dragged interminably. Never before had Shep kept the door to his inner office closed all day like this, so that she couldn't even hear his telephone calls, or know what he was doing.

At last, at the very end of the day, the door finally opened.

"Gwen, may I see you a minute?" Shep said.

She went inside numbly, and heard the door close behind her. She stood looking out of the window, not daring to face Shep.

But when he spoke, his voice was soft. What he said was startlingly unexpected.

"Gwen, I owe you an apology!" he said.

She waited, not believing her ears.

"I just got a long distance phone call from Joe," he went on. "He said he had been thinking about what he told me last night before he left for New York. He said, in the first place, he never should have opened his mouth at all, but since he had, he thought he'd better go all the way and tell me the whole story. I'm glad he did, Gwen. Because I understand everything now."

Her heart was tight and small inside of her. She didn't dare turn around.

"What—did he tell you?"

"He told me," Shep said slowly, "that the reason you had done this was because you

[*Turn page*]

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wanted to save me from a bad mistake. He said that, even though you knew I didn't care for you, you still were enough interested in me to try and help me."

"Oh, why didn't he mind his own business!"

Unable to control herself any longer, she buried her face in her hands and began to cry. Shep crossed the room hastily and put his arms around her.

"You didn't let me finish," he went on softly. "You didn't let me tell you that Joe is wrong. You see, Gwen, it just happens that I *do* care for you. I care for you very much."

She looked up at him. Through her tears she saw that his eyes were gentle. But she couldn't give in. She didn't dare.

"You're just sorry for me," she choked. "You're just sorry for me because Joe put me in such a spot."

"Don't be sore at Joe," Shep said. "If it hadn't been for that blundering move of his, I might have gone on indefinitely kidding myself. You see, Gwen, I've been in love with you for a long time, even if I was too stupid to see it. Don't you realize I asked you to join Portia and me last night because I was jealous of Joe? Don't you see I wanted to be with you so that I could enjoy looking at you and talking to you? It's all so clear to me now, Gwen. You've got to believe me."

All at once she couldn't fight any more. The longing which had burned inside of her for so many months swelled over her, and she gave in to it. She put her arms around Shep and buried her face in his coat, sobbing away all the heartache which had plagued her for so long.

"Easy, darling," Shep whispered. "Easy. It's all right now. Everything's going to be swell from here on in."

She controlled herself with an effort, and looked up at him again, still not daring to believe that this wasn't a dream which would puff away from her in the next moment. As if to smother any doubts, Shep touched his lips to hers, paused, then drew her to him in a kiss that even Gwen couldn't doubt. He released her finally.

"Darling," he murmured, and she could tell that he was as shaken as she was.

"I know," she whispered. "I know it's right now. All of it."

And their lips met again, to seal a pact between them which would last for always.

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Miss Patricia, Salt Lake City, Utah: A light nail polish is more flattering to short, stubby fingers. The darker shades of polish will only accentuate their shortness.

Selma B., Lexington, Nebraska: You should use an astringent after you have cleansed your face. It will help close those enlarged pores. Witch hazel is fine. Cold or ice water helps to contract them, too. Wrap a cube of ice in your washcloth and rub it over the entire face.

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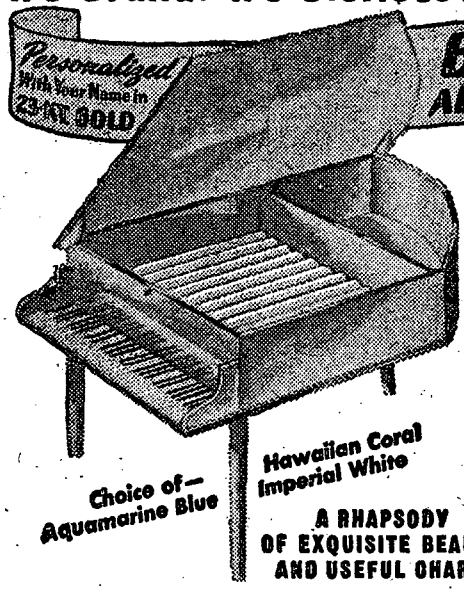

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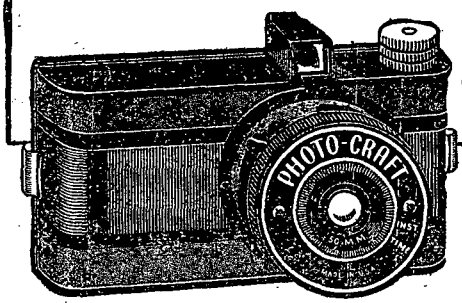

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